

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the University of Victoria crest. The crest is a shield divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant shows a building with a flag. The top-right quadrant shows a moose head with a cross on its forehead. The bottom-left quadrant shows a three-masted sailing ship on the water. The bottom-right quadrant shows an eagle with its wings spread. Above the shield is a crown with four points, each containing a flower. Below the shield is a banner with the motto 'ANE FOR A'.

## **Agenda Item 10**

**Council of the Future – Closer To Home**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Council of the Future – Closer To Home  
**Meeting:** Education, Children and Young People Executive  
**Date:** 14 September 2021  
**Submitted By:** Director of Children’s Services

**1. What is the Priority Project being reported on?**

1.1 Closer To Home currently consists of 6 active projects with dedicated project managers, all of whom are Service Managers:

- Alternative Family Placement
- Best Practice in Child Protection
- Family Support Services
- Procuring for the Future: Procurement & Commissioning Manager
- Supported Accommodation
- Young People at the Centre of Residential Care

1.2 The project sponsor for Closer To Home is the Senior Service Manager from Children’s Services Social Work.

1.3 Closer To Home is part of Falkirk Council’s transformation programme called Council of the Future (COTF). The programme aims to help us change what we do and how we do it so we can deliver on our priorities - Communities, Enterprise, Innovation - and our Corporate Plan promise of making the Falkirk area “The Place to Be where everyone can fulfil their potential”.

1.4 Closer To Home routinely reports performance to the Communities Workstream Board.

**2. Recommendations**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Education, Children and Young People Executive:**

- 1) note the progress and achievements of the Closer To Home Strategy;
- 2) note that a report in relation to the service re-design of the Initial Response Team (IRT) pilot will be taken to Executive in second quarter of 2022/23 for decision;
- 3) note the savings within the revised Closer To Home Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022-26.

**3. Project Overview**

**3.1 Vision and Objectives**

### 3.1.1 Vision

Closer To Home is a Children's Services Strategy with the ambition to improve outcomes for children and young people and to ensure sustainability of services in the future. Closer To Home places strong emphasis on preventative approaches; determining to provide early help and support to families. The overarching vision for Closer To Home is "strong families, safe children, and brighter futures".

### 3.1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Strategy set out to:

- safely reduce the number of children looked after away from home;
- shift the balance of care;
- ensure all our children including the most vulnerable will achieve in learning, life, and work;
- have families at the centre of decision making and planning for the children.

Appendix 1 provides a project overview of objectives, achievements, outcome focused benefits, savings, next steps and, where appropriate, the requirement for any future member decisions.

### 3.2 Financial Benefits

With support from the Council Of The Future Change Programme, the Closer To Home Strategy is projected to deliver just over £2.2m of savings up to 2021/22 through implementation of service redesign and transformation within key projects. To date, the project has delivered financial achievements and improved services for children and families in Falkirk.

3.2.1 The updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTPF) reflects the savings identified over the period of the Strategy, shown below.

<b>Year</b>	<b>19/20</b>	<b>20/21</b>	<b>21/22</b>	<b>22/23</b>	<b>23/24</b>	<b>24/25</b>	<b>25/26</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Savings May 2021</b>	<b>-837</b>	<b>-700</b>	<b>-700</b>	<b>-1532</b>	<b>-1171</b>	<b>-1015</b>	<b>-958</b>	<b>-6913</b>

3.2.2 In line with the Closer To Home transformation project and MTPF above, £4.676m savings are included in the Business Plan from 2022/2023 onwards. Further information contained with the project overview at Appendix 1.

### 3.3 Measures of Success

Building on achievements noted throughout the project overview at Appendix 1, current performance information in a number of areas is noted in the table below. Work continues to develop other relevant key performance indicators as the project progresses.

PROJECT	PERFORMANCE TO DATE	2021/2022 TARGET
<b>Alternative Family Placement</b>	Recruited <b>26</b> new foster carers since 2018	<b>+10</b> new foster carers year on year
	Increased providers on fostering framework to 11	10
<b>Best Practice in Child Protection</b>	<b>96%</b> of all new referrals to the service are screened and actioned in 24 hours *in the first 4 weeks*	<b>100%</b>
	<b>73%</b> reduction in referral backlog	<b>100%</b>
<b>Procurement</b>	<b>89%</b> of all provision contracted	<b>80%</b>
	<b>67%</b> of public sector spend reviewed	<b>100%</b>

### 3.4 Milestone Plan

Attached at Appendix 2, the Closer To Home Roadmap shows planned milestones to 2026.

## 4. Considerations

- 4.1 The current national policy context for Children's Services is both complex and challenging with potential unprecedented change in how public services are governed, structured, and delivered. Significant policy developments in relation to a new National Care Service have been proposed within the recently published consultation document resulting from the Independent Review of Adult Social Care <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-care-service-scotland-consultation-easy-read/pages/1/>. The scope of the consultation includes not only adult care but children and justice social work services in relation to how services will be structured both in governance and delivery models.
- 4.2 The Promise <https://thepromise.scot/plan-21-24/>, developed after 3 years of review and consultation involving 5,500 care experienced children, young people and adults, brings with it the need for widespread change in how we meaningfully engage and support children and their families, recognising the crucial importance of family and relationship.
- 4.3 As part of the delivery of The Promise, legislative changes in relation to the rights of brothers and sisters as detailed in Section 5.4 have both cost and resource implications.
- 4.4 New National Child Protection Guidance has been launched this year, with anticipated timescales from implementation within the next year, which brings with it challenges and resource demand in key areas of multi-agency practice in child protection.

- 4.5 The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) is being developed to ensure children caught up in conflict and political instability are supported to access durable and effective support including care when separated from their family. Young people in need of care and protection will be supported by every country in the UK. The NTS seeks to secure equal provision for supporting UASC, with all Local Authorities providing accommodation and support on a rota basis.
- 4.6 As noted in section 2, consideration of the future of the IRT will come forward in a report to the Education, Children and Young People Executive in the second quarter of 2022/23.
- 4.7 The 7th Closer To Home project will become active by November 2021 in relation to Self-Directed Support (SDS) to enable families to determine their own solutions, with aligned budgets to empower families. Families will be enabled to purchase service or support to address needs and improve family relationships and care, enabling children to remain at home where possible.

## **5. Implications**

### **Financial**

#### **5.1 Change Fund**

Change Fund Awards have provided additional project resources to the value of £0.436m up to 2020/21, with more than £0.227m of costs already incurred.

### **Resources**

- 5.2 The Closer To Home projects have been strengthened by the appointment of various key posts.

### **Legal**

- 5.3 There are no legal requirements to be considered for this report.

### **Risks/Dependencies**

- 5.4 Closer To Home manages risk in line with the COTF Change Programme and Corporate Risk Register.

#### **5.4.1 Impact of legislative changes requiring siblings to be kept together**

Mitigation - The newly issued guidance from Scottish Government which supports the implementation of legislative changes in July 2021 is currently being considered, including cost implications. The legislation requires the Local Authority to carry out its duty to promote the rights of brother and sisters to be together and, where this is not appropriate, they must be supported to have opportunities to stay regularly in touch with one another to nurture and support their relationships. This builds on what is good practice but is now enshrined within the Children's (Scotland) Act 2020 and the Looked After Children (Scotland) Amendment Regulations July 2021.

#### 5.4.2 **Trade Union agreement to changes in staff working patterns and Terms & Conditions**

Mitigation - A Children & Families Social Work Trade Union Forum has been developed in July 2021 which will meet regularly to discuss Closer To Home projects as part of an agreed standing agenda.

The regular forums have been developed to enhance communication and understanding of the projects and need for transformation. It is anticipated that service and Trade Union representatives will reach earlier resolution through discussion on service redesign which may have implications for staff.

In addition, there is now a Trade Union representative in attendance at the Communities Workstream Board to keep communication open and productive throughout the transformation process.

5.4.3 To progress the Closer To Home Project as planned, dependencies have been identified across the various COTF projects and these are monitored on an ongoing basis. The following dependencies exist within other areas:-

- Liquid Logic Project
- Implementation of revised National Child Protection Guidance
- Implementation of the wider GIRFEC Agenda
- Succeed Today Excel Tomorrow and ASN review
- Connected Falkirk and Connecting Scotland
- Climate change considerations to facilities.

#### **Equalities**

5.5 Each project has initiated the EPIA process.

#### **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

5.6 Although there are no direct sustainability and environmental issues within the scope of the Strategy, there are identified links with the Climate Change Project which have been taken forward.

### **6. Conclusion**

6.1 Closer To Home is now in year 3 of implementation and continues to respond to local and national demands to support children and young people across Falkirk.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Closer To Home Project Overview

Appendix 2 Closer To Home Roadmap

## **List of Background Papers**

None

Objectives	Achievements	Outcome Focused Benefits	Savings			
Alternative Family Placement			22/23 £'000	23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase our alternative family-based care so that 90% of looked after children are cared for in community placements which will align to the Scottish national average</li> <li>• Increase the number of children by 45 who are looked after in alternative community-based care options by 2026 including kinship care, foster placement, and supported accommodation options</li> <li>• Align kinship care support and assessment to fostering and adoption services and develop a Family Placement Team</li> <li>• Extend the foster care framework to increase foster care placement options.</li> </ul>	<p>Alternative Family Placement has recruited 26 foster carers, reaching 64 in total. Due to the age profile of our existing carers, the net gain has been impacted by a significant number of carers retiring. However, the number of providers on the fostering framework has been increased by over 100%, from 5 providers to 11 by developing an enhanced foster care framework in 2021. This project has supported a shift to community-based care placements and generated efficiencies of <b>£253k</b>.</p>	<p>The Closer to Home programme of work and the defined projects will continue to focus on approaches that will shift the balance of care from children and young people being looked in residential care to ensure children can be supported in their communities, whether that be at home, with extended family or in supported accommodation on leaving care. The ambition and vision is to ensure young people are supported locally and remain connected with their community including school, extended family, friends and activities</p>	<p><b>155</b></p>	<p><b>155</b></p>	<p><b>155</b></p>	<p><b>310</b></p>



**Next Steps:**

Incrementally increase community-based placement capacity to 90% of looked after children

45 additional placements for children available in alternative family-based care with the recruitment of 30 foster carers and additional capacity with addition of kinship care

Objectives	Achievements	Outcome Focused Benefits	Savings			
Best Practice in Child Protection			22/23 £'000	23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed the recently established Initial Response Team and timescales as agreed at the Education, Children and Young People Executive in June 2021</li> <li>• Ensure all children at risk of harm, including unborn children, will have a multi-agency assessment and plan in place and reviewed within expected timescales</li> <li>• Deploy an ongoing robust internal Quality Assurance and Self Evaluation process to promote improvement and learning and align to workforce development</li> <li>• Ensure provision and use of digital solutions meet service and service user needs</li> </ul>	<p>The Initial Response Team [IRT] became operational on 21 June 2021. Early data evaluation is showing the significant impact of the team with improved response times, earlier decision making and reduced waiting time for children and families who require a social work service, by more than half in the first 4 weeks of implementation, reaching a target of 90% of referrals being actioned within 24 hours. This pilot project is in implementation for 22months and subject to evaluation with recommendation regarding the sustainability of this model being considered by members. Implementation of improved risk assessment tools and training to support practitioners to safely work with families in their communities and effectively manage risk and protection concerns. This project enables the broader aims of the strategy and to improve outcomes for young people being cared for and supported locally in community settings.</p>	<p>By creating the IRT which provides a dedicated response to assessing needs and risk of all new reported concerns, will enable locality social work teams to focus entirely on children and young people and their families who have active social work lead professionals taking forward plans and intervention to support young people where possible in their community. Children referred to social work are already experiencing improved response times and earlier decision making in relation to the supports they required, with service signposting to families where early help is required. Evaluative measures of the 22-month pilot are in place and further funding considerations are required to embed this approach beyond a Pilot phase.</p>				

	Developed Children’s Services Resource Group involving practitioners and managers to increase scrutiny and accountability for all placement requests					
<p><b>Next Steps:</b>                  Embed assessment tools and guidance in practice to improve the quality of assessments of risk and need                  Implement enhanced systems of recording all child protection activities including referral, investigation, assessment and outcome                  Case Conferences and Core Groups are held within expected timescales as per national and local guidance                  Performance is enhanced through routine quality assurance and regular self-evaluation and audit activity.                  Utilise digital solutions key processes including engagement with children and families where appropriate and holding meeting.</p>						
<p><b>Member Decision:</b> a paper in relation to the service re-design of the Initial Response Team pilot will be taken to Executive second quarter of 22/23 for decision</p>						

Objectives	Achievements	Outcome Focused Benefits	Savings			
Family Support Services			22/23 £'000	23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amalgamate the Family Support and Intensive Family Support teams and develop a single referral pathway for family support by October 2021</li> <li>Develop a strategic family support approach including commissioned, grant awarded and Council Services to ensure families receive the right help when they need it</li> <li>Review and replace current Following the Public Pound [FPP] grant awards to contracted services, by January 2022</li> <li>Identify and progress any training needs to manage risks associated with children remaining in the care of their families.</li> </ul>	<p>Commissioning of 2 pilot preventative community-based support services to support children on the edges of care and support return of children from care home; Includem and Aberlour Sustain projects were both implemented in March 2021 with anticipated savings identified. Early evaluation indicates that Includem delivered 827 hours of support to young people and families in the first quarter and responded to 26 calls to service helpline for families. 65% of the calls took place out with core working hours where families often need additional support in evening and weekends. Within the MTFP there are identified <b>savings of £478k</b> from these 2 projects in 2021/22.</p>	<p>The Strategy aims to move resource over time to focus on earlier family-based support to children and their families and to empower them to identify their own solutions where possible. Consultation with young people and with families in key projects is crucial to ensure service re-design is informed by the experiences of those who use them. The importance of a comprehensive range of accessible family support with clear referral pathways being co-ordinated via a family support strategy is key to providing early help to ensure children and their parents and carers receive the support they need when they need it.</p> <hr/> <p>** Aberlour Sustain</p> <p>** Includem</p>	<p>499</p> <p>517</p>	<p>499</p> <p>517</p>	<p>343</p> <p>648</p>	

**Next Steps:**

Develop and implement the Family Support Strategy

New Family Support Team fully trained to meet service needs

Year 1 of Includem Pilot evaluated

Year 1 of Aberlour Sustain pilot evaluated

Develop and utilise a suite of reporting to monitor progress of project

Objectives	Achievements	Outcome Focused Benefits	Savings			
Procuring for the Future			22/23 £'000	23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure 100% of commissioned spend of £10k and above with 3rd party care providers are on contract.</li> <li>• Review all spend with other public sector bodies and put contract agreements in place where appropriate.</li> <li>• Develop and implement a standardised outcome-based monitoring tool.</li> <li>• Develop a resource guide for practitioners to maximise referral uptake and ensure practice understanding of all commissioned services.</li> </ul>	<p>Delivered efficiencies in contract arrangements with care providers in negotiating pricing structures thus reducing costs for purchased placements utilising the Scot Excel nationally agreed contract. This has generated contract <b>savings of £688k.</b></p>	<p>With the completion of an outcome-based monitoring tool and commissioned resource directory, the process will become less resource intensive and increase standardisation. The standardised outcome monitoring tool ensures the providers are meeting the needs of the young people in their care. Robust care planning to support good outcomes for young people is key to their health and wellbeing and attainment.</p>	181			
<p><b>Next Steps</b>                      All 3rd Party providers spend (£10k and above) on Contract with quarterly progress updates re contracting status</p> <p>Spend with other Public Sector Bodies contracted (where required)</p> <p>Develop an Outcome-based Monitoring Tool and commissioned resource directory for children’s services.</p>						

Objectives	Achievements	Outcome Focused Benefits	Savings			
<b>Supported Accommodation</b>			22/23 £'000	23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the range of accommodation and support options available to care leavers in accordance with the Housing Options for Care Leavers Protocol, by one additional choice by April 2022</li> <li>• Increase the number of available supported accommodation places to enable young people to transition from care, from 16 to 20 by April 2022</li> <li>• Provide support to all eligible young people to make positive transitions from being looked after towards adulthood by October 2022 and develop system to measure and report on transitions.</li> </ul>	<p>The development of supported independent tenancies for young people leaving care. Steps to Success (previously known as Garry Place) initiative has generated <b>£818k of savings</b> whilst improving housing options for care leavers and supporting independent tenancies.</p>	<p>By providing an increased range of accommodation and support options available to care leavers, more young people will be able to transition from care placements which can often be outwith a young person's local community and is not necessarily enabling a young person to transition effectively to more independent living. The scoping of the second supported accommodation provision within the Strategy is nearing conclusion, with co-design input from young people being a significant factor.</p>				
<p><b>Next Steps:</b>                      Publication of contract notice with Tender Documentation                       Implement contract monitoring</p>						

Objectives	Achievements	Outcome Focused Benefits	Savings			
Young People at the Centre of Residential Care			22/23 £'000	23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase sustained care options for young people requiring care in Falkirk children’s houses by 100%.</li> <li>• Recruit 6 FTE residential posts to ensure staffing rota supports effective management and the needs of children are central to staff continuity and availability.</li> <li>• Reduce reliance on casual staff and overtime.</li> <li>• Create a more flexible team supporting the needs of children and young people and maximising the workforce skillset.</li> <li>• Develop trauma informed practice training for all relevant staff.</li> <li>• Develop reporting to measure progress of project and track placement moves for young people.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop suite of reporting to monitor progress of project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aligning both houses to enable children to remain in placement for as long as they require, we will reduce the number of transitions for young people, allowing them greater opportunity to build and sustain relationships with their care givers and peers, in turn improving their mental health and wellbeing and the long term outcomes.</li> <li>• Increasing the staff compliment will reduce staff stress and fatigue and reliance on casual staff, creating a more consistent staff group.</li> <li>• Changes to the management structure allows us to develop trauma informed practice across both houses as a single service.</li> </ul>				



**Next Steps:**

Shared model of care and rotas in place across both houses with staff working flexibly to meet the needs of the young people

New working practice model in place

Implement all staff complete trauma informed practice training

Develop and implement suite of reporting to monitor progress of project

			YEAR DUE						
Alternative Family Placement			19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Milestone/Action Description	Due date	Current status*							
Marketing post in place in the fostering service to ensure ongoing responsiveness and presence on internet and social media plan in relation to carer recruitment	01/02/2022	In Progress							
Re-focus remit of the fostering team to cover all alternative family placements, with associated change of name	06/01/2021	Complete							
Member approval for updated procedure and processes including changes to financial payments to kinship carers.	07/01/2021	Complete							
Incrementally increase community based placement capacity to 90% of looked after children	04/01/2025	In Progress							
45 additional placements for children available in alternative family based care with the recruitment of 30 foster carers and additional capacity with addition of kinship care	04/01/2025	In Progress							
As part of our community based provision, include kinship care numbers in our overall alternative family placement numbers	08/01/2021	Complete							
BP in Child Protection									
Initial Response Team in place providing a single point of contact for all new referrals for the service	21/06/2021	Complete							
Backlog of duty/intake referrals reduced by the end of September 2021 to ensure that children in families receive a service where this is assessed as required.	30/09/2021	Complete							

Assessment tools and guidance are developed and embedded in practice to improve the quality of assessments of risk and need. (linked to objective 3 - written assessments of risk and need for all children accessing a service)	01/09/2021	In Progress							
Enhanced systems of recording all child protection activities is implemented including referral, investigation, assessment and outcome. This will be built into the new Liquid Logic IT system (linked to objective 3 - written assessments of risk and need for all children accessing a service)	30/09/2021	In Progress							
Case Conferences and Core Groups are held within expected timescales as per national and local guidance	01/09/2021	In Progress							
Performance is enhanced through routine quality assurance and regular self evaluation and audity activity. (This links to all objectives as QA and Self Evaluation are how we will assess the quality of work and effectiveness of the improvements plans in place)	01/09/2021	In Progress							
Digital solutions utilised to move away from paper based systems and to maximise the use of IT solutions for some key processes including engagement with children and families where appropriate and holding meetings. ( This links to all of the objectives in the plan as digital solutions are how we will partly deliver key processes including some case conferences and core groups)	01/01/2022	In Progress							
<b>Family Support Services</b>									
Family Support and Intensive Family Support amalgamated into a single pathway of referral to have an Integrated Family Support Service	20/02/2021	In Progress							
Stakeholder Engagement Completed and next steps determined	15/12/2021	In Progress							

Service User engagement and co-design of new service	15/11/2021	In Progress							
Communication to Partners and service users to inform of new service offering	31/10/2021								
Family Support Strategy developed and in place	01/10/2023	Not Started							
New Family Support Team fully trained to meet Service Needs	01/03/2023	In Progress							
Year 1 -Includem Pilot evaluated	01/03/2022	In Progress							
Year 1 - Aberlour Sustain pilot evaluated	01/04/2023	In Progress							
Develop suite of reporting to monitor progress of project	31/12/2021	Not Started							
<b>Procurement</b>									
All 3rd Party providers spend (£10k and above) on Contract with quarterly progress updates re contracting status	31/10/2022	In Progress							
Spend with other Public Sector Bodies contracted (where required)	31/03/2022	In Progress							
Develop an Outcome-based Monitoring Tool and commissioned resource directory for childrens services.	31/12/2022	Not Started							
<b>Supported Accommodation</b>									
Prepare 1st draft Service Specification for initial market engagement exercise	31/05/2021	In Progress							
Market Research with Service Spec to gain an understanding of possibilities/availability	12/07/2021	In Progress							
Publication of contract notice with Tender Documentation	30/11/2021	Not Started							
Contract Mobilisation and accomodation available for use	30/04/2022	Not Started							
Implement Contract Monitoring	30/07/2022	Not Started							
Project Closure	01/09/2022	Not Started							
<b>YP Residential</b>									
Wallace Crescent Residential Home provision changed to long term provision	30/06/2021	Complete							
Shared model of care and rotas in place across both houses and staff working flexibly to meet the needs of the young people	31/01/2022	In Progress							
Mobilisation and Recruitment Complete	31/01/2022	Not Started							

New working practice model in place	01/12/2021	Not Started							
All staff complete trauma informed practice training	31/12/2021	In Progress							
Develop suite of reporting to monitor progress of project	28/02/2022	Not Started							
Project Closure	15/04/2022	Not Started							