

FALKIRK COUNCIL

SUBJECT: INTERIM RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

MEETING: HOUSING AND SOCIAL CARE COMMITTEE

DATE: 1ST SEPTEMBER 2009

AUTHOR: ACTING DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from Members to contract with a residential care provider, Care Visions, to provide 4 local medium term placements for Falkirk young people, on an interim basis. The report also highlights that work is being done to evaluate the longer term options for this type of care and proposes that an update is provided by the Acting Director of Social Work Services at the earliest opportunity.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2001, Members agreed a new structure for the provision of local care for our young people. The plan for local residential child care provision includes a long term unit, a short term unit and a medium term therapeutic unit.

Since then the Council has opened the long term unit, expanded this to accommodate 5 young people, and commenced work to develop a short term unit, which is due to open in early 2010.

- 2.2 In June 2006, Members of the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to the Council block purchasing 3 beds from a local care provider, Care Visions, pending the opening of our own short term accommodation. This provided the Council with local care for our young people at a significant saving to the Council, at that time £2,700 per bed per week against £3,500 - £4,300 for other providers. Additionally in 2007 Members agreed to the purchase of an additional external short term/crisis care bed from Crossreach in a joint one year contract with Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils.

- 2.3 Since 2006 Care Visions have provided short term care for a maximum of 3 young people at any one time at their unit at Westside Farm, Avonbridge. A positive working relationship has developed and they have indicated their willingness to continue to provide residential care to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable young people. Following the opening of the Council's own short term unit early next year, we will be able to meet the bulk of our needs for short term accommodation in a cost effective way through in house provision. However, we will still have some outstanding needs, primarily for medium term accommodation for younger children. The remainder of this report outlines the outstanding need for residential care and makes proposals for how

these could be met in a more cost effective manner through an interim revised contract with Care Visions.

3. CURRENT REQUIREMENTS FOR RESIDENTIAL CARE

3.1 As outlined above, by the beginning of 2010 it is envisaged that the Council will have succeeded in developing 5 long term places and 5 short term places for children and young people requiring residential care. In 2008, in recognition of the changes in patterns and trends relating to residential care and the resultant financial pressures, a Best Value Review was undertaken. This examined patterns and trends relating to residential child care and confirmed that there continued to be a need for residential provision for younger children who needed medium term therapeutic input. The number of full-time placements of this nature required in recent years was as follows:

2005/2006	3
2006/2007	6
2007/2008	7
2008/2009	6

3.2 The review also concluded that, in the light of the difficulties experienced to date in developing our own in house provision, there would be merits in undertaking an option appraisal of different approaches to achieving medium term places, rather than automatically continuing with a model of in-house provision. A sum of £750,000 has been set aside in the capital programme for 2010-2011 for a therapeutic unit. Work has commenced to undertake an options appraisal which will be reported to members in due course and which will help to inform a decision about whether a further in-house project in 2010-2011 represents the best way forward for meeting the Council's outstanding needs for residential child care.

3.3 In the meantime, however, the Council has the opportunity to enter into a revised contract with Care Visions which could provide a more cost effective way of meeting our needs for medium term accommodation for young people.

4. PROPOSAL

4.1 Care Visions remains the only residential child care provider in Falkirk Council area apart from 2 units providing specialist care to children with disabilities. Falkirk Council continues to require residential care for young people requiring medium term care, and until our own provision is available such placements are being purchased externally at a cost of between £3,200 and £4,500 per child per week. Of the placements currently purchased externally, 7 are spot purchased from Care Visions, at a cost of £3,375 to £3,970 per bed per week dependent on level of support required.

4.2 Care Visions also provide other types of residential care across the country, including long term and medium term care and are therefore an experienced provider. Following discussions, they have advised that they could reconfigure their provision in Westside to

provide 4 medium term beds, through a revision of their current block purchase contract, at a weekly cost of £2,892 per bed.

This compares favourably with the costs of other external placements as outlined above and represents a substantial discount on their spot purchase placements.

4.3 A revised 15 month contract, to this effect from January 2010 to April 2011 would:-

- allow the service to update the work previously done to ensure the model of service delivery remains the right one, and provide members with an options appraisal.
- 'save' the council £483 per bed per week, or £31,395 per bed over a 15 month period.
- allow children to remain in their local community, attend their local school, and keep contact with family and friends.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The cost of residential care for children is a significant financial pressure for the Council. Entering into a revised contract with an existing provider of care would save the council £1,932 per week on 4 placements, plus savings in staff time and travel.

5.2 Over a 15 month period, the contract would cost £751,920, at current rates a saving to the Council of £125,580.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no human resource implications

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Patterns and trends relating to looked after children indicate that the Council will continue to require at least 4 medium term residential placements. These are currently spot purchased externally to the Council with consequent implications for children who are living out of the area and financial pressures on the Council

7.2 Contracting with Care Visions for local provision of 4 placements is a means to bring costs down in the interim, and gives space to agree the best way to meet our commitment to local provision of medium term/therapeutic care.

7.3 Our existing relationship with Care Visions means we would be working with a known provider and able to monitor standards of care effectively.

8. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that members should;

- 8.1 endorse the proposal to continue to contract with Care Visions on an interim basis to provide medium term care within the council area for 4 young people and refer this to Policy and Resources committee for approval,
- 8.2 request that the Acting Director of Social Work provide an update and options appraisal in relation to the longer term plans for a medium term/therapeutic unit at the earliest opportunity.

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ACTING DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

Date: 3rd August 2009
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Best Value Review of Residential Child Care - Best Value and Audit Forum