

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 18 MAY 2006

OUTWITH PLACEMENTS

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Elected Members with a summary of the Department of Educational and Social Services use of outwith placements up to 31 March 2006 and to seek approval for a method of management of these placements.
- 1.2 This report is not intended to consider the specific cases of secure placements made in relation to the Children's Hearing and Criminal Justice System, nor the cases of children educated outwith the authority as a result of foster care arrangements. Both of these are administered under different arrangements.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 When the separate departments of education and social work were merged in 2000, one of the main reasons was to secure better integrated working. One of the key areas where this is both important and practical is in the management of outwith placements.
- 2.2 On behalf of the Council, the Department of Educational and Social Services purchases placements for children and young people in establishments outwith the management of East Ayrshire. These placements can be very expensive, and sometimes are a considerable distance from the child's home. It is the Council's policy to educate both within a mainstream setting and to do this as close as possible to the child's home community. For these reasons an outwith placement is therefore only considered when a child's needs cannot be met adequately within the Council's own resources. Some children may be placed externally as a specific outcome of a Children's Hearing.
- 2.3 In its simplest form an outwith placement can result from one of two causes:

Special educational needs (SEN): a child may have particular special educational needs requiring specialist support that lies outwith either the skills and experience of Authority staff, or the accommodation and resources available. Examples include children who are both deaf and blind, or those who have an extreme autistic spectrum disorder. These placements were traditionally funded out of the Education budget.

Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties: these placements arise from children experiencing difficulties in the community. Usually they have come to

the attention of the Children’s Hearing system. Such difficulties may arise from the child’s family or social situation, but equally may originate in a diagnosed behavioural disorder such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. These placements were traditionally funded out of the social work budget.

3. HOW THIS PROVISION IS MANAGED

3.1 So far as possible, the central aim is to make provision for children within their own community. To this end, the establishment-based resources within the Department are:

Social Work	Education
Montgomery Place	Park School
Kilmaurs Children’s Unit	Witchhill School
Bellsford Children’s Unit	Woodstock School
	Hillside School
Foster carers	Mainstream Support bases
Youth strategy	

The children’s units do not make an educational provision. For this service there is reliance on mainstream schools or access to specialist resources.

3.2 The Department uses a system which is known as “staged intervention”. In summary this gives children and families access to resources in a structured and considered way. In other words, the start point is low level resource, near to the community. As the needs either increase or are assessed as increasing that access is granted to resources at higher levels, and by implication cost.

This system is mirrored in the assessment arrangements. Initially, assessments are carried out by a school assessment team (SAT). As the child needs access to wider resources, a community assessment team (CAT) becomes involved with education, social work and health staff as well as parents and the young person. This system has evolved over the years and has been proven to be successful.

When a child’s needs go beyond those potentially available to a CAT they are considered by a Prioritisation Group. This includes the Principal Psychologist, Quality Improvement Officer (ASN), Youth Strategy Manager, departmental finance managers and a Senior Social Work Manager (Children and Families). The Prioritisation Group:

- Consider cases referred to them by the CAT;
- Consider cases that arise from a direct referral;
- Monitor the children currently on an outwith placement;
- Plan the re-integration of children’s return from outwith placements to authority resources.

When a child is destined for an outwith placement a form is submitted for consideration and authorisation by two Heads of Service, with final approval being given by the Executive Director. Each individual placement is therefore subjected to high levels of scrutiny.

4. THE ISSUES

4.1 The pressure on financial resources in relation to outwith placements is extreme. This results from:

- the absolute cost of the placements;
- the fact that the providers of placements have a tradition of increasing their charges well above annual inflation rates;
- the increased statutory rights of parents and young people through placing requests;
- the well-documented increases in the support needs of particular groups of children in terms of volume and intensity; and
- there is no reliable way of predicting the changes in the profiles of needs of children or families and therefore to predict demand.

Taken together these factors mean that more than most other areas the resources to meet outwith placements are unlikely to match the need. This feature of the management of finances has regularly appeared in the budget reports presented to both committees.

4.2 Over time it has become increasingly apparent that the old distinctions between categories of children as reflected in paragraph 2.2 are outmoded. This is perhaps best illustrated by the abandonment of the term “special educational needs” and the adoption in new legislation of the term “additional support needs”. This shift recognises that in practice very few children have learning difficulties that can be solely addressed in school. Equally, very few children experiencing problems in the community are able to take full advantage of their learning opportunities. The distinction is therefore artificial and therefore requires to be managed in a more integrated way.

5. THE CURRENT POSITION

5.1 The main features of provision in this area of service are:

- 24 separate establishments are used. These are run either by local authorities or the private and voluntary sector.
- Most placements are in the old Strathclyde area, but three are over 200 miles from East Ayrshire.
- There are currently 47 children on an outwith placement of which 26 are residential.
- The highest number in any single establishment is 6 children.

5.2 The number of children who have been placed outwith the Authority in 2005/06 is 11. The number who have left an outwith placement in the same period was 15.

6. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council is under statutory obligations through the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to make provision which meets the needs of individual children.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 In financial year, the costs for a single outwith placement ranged from £12,360 to £143,393. There were 17 placements in excess of £50,000 each. (These amounts do not include associated costs such as transport.)

7.2 The total amount of budgeted financial resource available for this aspect of provision, taking education and social work together is £2,098,400. The projected costs are £2,303,082. For 2005-2006 the projected social work costs were £682,000 with a projected actual cost of £907,760.

8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This aspect of provision makes a significant contribution to the Improving Community Safety and Improving Opportunities themes of the Community Plan.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that Members :

- (i) endorse the method of managing outwith placements described in Section 3 of this report;
- (ii) ask the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to provide future reports at 6 monthly intervals on this aspect of provision;
- (iii) ask the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that available resources are matched to established needs in this provision;
- (iv) note this report will also be considered by the Education Committee; and
- (v) otherwise note the contents of this report

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
GRS/GRS
29 May 2006

Encl (0)

Members requiring further information should contact
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. An Overarching Strategy on Inclusion, Social Work and Education Committee, 2005
2. Pathways to inclusion, Social Work and Education Committee, 2002
3. Budgetary reports to committee.
4. Education (Additional Support For Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : GRAHAM SHORT