

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 2 NOVEMBER 2006

OUTWITH PLACEMENTS

Report by 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 30 September.
- 1.2 This report is not intended to consider the specific cases of secure placements made in relation to the 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 At their meetings of May 2006, the Social Work and Education Committees approved an approach for the management and reporting of outwith placements. Members will recall that outwith placements are commissioned in direct relation to the needs of individual children. Some placements result from external drivers beyond the direct control of the Council. These include the decisions of the Children's Hearing system, and placing requests made under the conditions of Schedule 2 of the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004. Individual placements can be expensive, some being in excess of £150,000 per year. For these reasons, the outwith placement budgets for both social work and educational services are amongst the most volatile and liable to overspend of all service areas.
- 2.2 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 Members will recall, 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 the Senior 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.

- 3.2 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 ahead of 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 committee.

- 3.3 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.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 A review of the number of children in outwith placements was conducted by the Prioritisation Group in June 2006. The purpose of this review was to ensure that while children’s needs were being adequately met and that placements continued to appropriately address these needs.

- 4.2 As at 30 September 2006 there were:-

- 42 children or young people are in an outwith placement
- 07 children or young people have returned to the community since the last report (May 2006)
- 6 children have been placed in an outwith placement since the last report (May 2006)
- 17 children’s cases are presently under the management of the Prioritisation Group.

31 different establishments are being used.

The range of each individual placement cost is: £31,182 to £201,739

5. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 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.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

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

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The total amount of budgeted financial resource available for this aspect of provision, taking education (£1,561,340) and social work (£764,046) together is £2,325,386. The projected costs of placements are £2,679,041. These are presently distributed between the budgets as £1,036,479(Social Work) and £1,642,562(Education).
- 7.2 The need for transition planning means that these high levels of costs within education and children's and families' services will inevitably have future implications for adult services. The children who require this level of support as young people will also require assistance in adulthood. Sometimes these adult packages are also significantly expensive.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is recommended that Members :
- (i) ask the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to provide further 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

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GRS/GRS
27 October 2006
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Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services (01563-576017).

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- (i) An Overarching Strategy on Inclusion, Social Work and Education Committee, 2005
- (ii) Pathways to inclusion, Social Work and Education Committee , 2002
- (iii) Budgetary reports to committee.
- (iv) Outwith Placements, Social Work Committee, 18 May 2006
- (v) Outwith Placements, Education Committee, 23 May 2006

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : GRAHAM SHORT