

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 29 JANUARY 2004

THROUGH-CARE AND AFTERCARE SERVICES

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the implications of the proposed transfer of financial responsibility for relevant young persons who are looked after (both in accommodation and at home) from the Department of Work for Pensions (DWP) to the Local Authority;
- 1.2 To bring forward considerations which will ensure that the Department is in a position to meet the new Standards sought by the Scottish Executive.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The provision of Throughcare and Aftercare Services in Scotland has been reviewed by the Scottish Executive. The report submitted to the Executive commented on current standards of service and on the readiness to proceed with the proposed transfer of financial responsibilities from the DWP to the Local Authorities in Scotland. The implementation date for this process is 1 April 2004. (The transfer in England and Wales has already commenced).
- 2.2 The Report highlighted:
 - The provision of Throughcare and Aftercare Services which are a duty imposed on the Council under Sections 17 and 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 are generally regarded as underdeveloped.
 - Many young people move on from their care environment with insufficient preparation for living independently.
 - Many young people who move on may encounter difficulties in sustaining their tenancies and in securing employment.
 - Most young people should be the subject of longitudinal checking and have an awareness of how to re-engage with support systems if required.

- There is a broad recognition that critical events occur outwith office hours and that young people require to be supported at times of maximum vulnerability.

3.0 FINANCIAL TRANSFER FROM DEPARTMENT OF WORK AND PENSIONS TO SOCIAL WORK

3.1 It is proposed that the transfer of responsibilities will proceed with effect from 1 April 2004. The financial settlement from the Scottish Executive is intended to achieve a status of “no detriment” to current benefit based incomes.

3.2 The allocation notified to East Ayrshire Council by the Scottish Executive for each financial year is:

2003/04 £26,356 reflecting preparatory costs

2004/05 £105,423 reflecting the costs as numbers in the system rise and

2005/06 £131,779 reflecting the cost in a full year for service provision

3.3 It is anticipated that the proposed changes can be accommodated within the additional budget allocation. This report therefore takes account of these changes and gives consideration to maximising the existing resources presently committed to service provision to achieve improved services which respond to the concerns highlighted in the “Still a Bairn Report”.

4.0 THE ADDITIONAL DUTIES REQUIRED

4.1 The new duties specified under Section 73 of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 state that the Local Authority shall: “Carry out an assessment of the needs of care leavers to whom they have a duty under Section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995”.

4.2 New regulations will also be introduced under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, Section 73 (1) which will allow the Minister to give greater direction in relation to the assessment process.

4.3 Local Authorities will require to ensure that they provide flexible, responsive services which meet the varied needs of the young people concerned.

4.4 The Authority must ensure that systems are established to facilitate the payment of financial support to all relevant young persons who leave care and who establish themselves outwith their family home in the community of their choice at age sixteen or seventeen until they reach their eighteenth birthday.

5.0 STAFFING

- 5.1 The current Throughcare Team has a staffing complement of 1 Team Leader, 2 Resource Workers, and 1 Support Worker.
- 5.2 Subject to discussion with the Trade Union, it is proposed to establish a Team consisting 1 Team Leader and 3 Resource Workers in order to give a greater degree of flexibility around the times that a service will be provided, in order to ensure enhanced support outwith normal office hours.
- 5.3 A need is recognised for the introduction of additional administrative support in regard to the robust processing of payments to relevant service users and an enhanced area of responsibility in regard to the compilation of the comprehensive assessment records. Systems will be required to monitor the additional review requirements and to support the obligations in respect of assessable standards of planning and recording. A new administrative post will require to be created to reflect the significant increase above the current workload in relation to care planning and for the processing of financial payments to young people.

6.0 PREMISES

- 6.1 The existing service provision is delivered from the Social Work Office at 9 Balmoral Road, Kilmarnock. The office has limitations and does not have facilities for cooking, food storage, laundry or showers. It is in general terms only accessible during office hours. It is proposed that new premises are identified to enhance service delivery and meet the support needs of young people.

7.0 POLICY / LEGAL / FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Nil.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The Scottish Executive is seeking to enhance the service currently provided to young people who are Looked After and Accommodated in their transition into adulthood.
- 8.2 The proposals in this report seek to address the new requirements through improving the staffing and accommodation of the Throughcare Team with the aim of providing a more flexible and focused service which will address the needs of young people during their transition from Care to Adulthood.

8.3 The bulk of the allocation from the Executive is intended to replace the Benefits payments which young people currently receive from the Department of Works and Pensions (D.W.P.) and the proposals in this report reflect that this is where the allocation should be concentrated.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Committee is asked:

- (i) to approve the proposals outlined in the report,
- (ii) to refer the staff implications in respect of the additional administrative post to the Corporate Governance Committee, for approval,
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services
Enc (0)
24 December 2003

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report from the Working Group on The Throughcare and Aftercare of Children in Scotland – Scottish Executive – ISBN 0-7559-0519-9

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IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : BILL EADIE