

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 11TH SEPTEMBER 2003

SERVICES FOR LOOKED AFTER AND ACCOMMODATED YOUNG PEOPLE

Report By The Director Of Educational And Social Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Committee for a proposed Best Value Review on services for looked after and accommodated young people.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Due to the growth of preventive work with children and families, only the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people are looked after and accommodated by East Ayrshire. The majority of these children and young people have complex needs and their behaviour presents challenges for those responsible for providing care.
- 2.2 Since 1997 there has been an overall increase nationally in the numbers of children and young people accommodated and this additional demand for placements is unlikely to lessen in the immediate future.
- 2.3 The growth of drug misuse within East Ayrshire, as across Scotland, is a significant factor contributing to greater numbers of younger children being placed on the Child Protection Register and also requiring to be accommodated. In the calendar year to date 25% of admissions are due to parental drug misuse.
- 2.4 With the introduction of National Care Standards in 2002, the implication is that these standards will be taken into account by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (the Care Commission) in the registration and inspection of residential and foster care. This is a new requirement on Local Authorities to meet specific statutory expectations as set out. If these Standards are breached or not implemented, then the Care Commission has the power to enforce a cancellation of registration.

3.0 TRENDS IN RESIDENTIAL AND FOSTERING USAGE

- 3.1 Since 1976 the number of accommodated children and young people has increased from 76 to 110 (as of 1/8/03), this is an increase of 44%.
- 3.2 There has been an overall reduction in the number of young people requiring to be placed in residential schools since 1996. Apart from 2001 when placements were at 21, there has been a significant decrease from 26 in 1996 to 16 as at 1/8/03. This figure also includes 3 children with special educational needs. This group of children previously were not considered as being accommodated.
- 3.3 East Ayrshire currently has two residential units providing 14 places. Kilmaurs (8 bedded) is now normally providing 2 additional placements due to demand. Since 1/4/03 there has only been 2 days when the Unit was not above capacity. Bellsford is also expected to provide additional places when demand dictates, and although the Unit has, at times, provided up to 3 additional places, it is more often expected to provide one extra placement, forfeiting the dining room and transforming this into a bedroom.
- 3.4 Presently there are 5 children under 12 years in residential care, and by being unable to provide family placements for this group we are unable to attain the East Ayrshire performance target of not placing under 12's in Residential Care. As of 1/8/03 there are 19 children and young people awaiting a carers placement.
- 3.5 There are currently 78 children in fostering placements and this includes 6 Caring families with placements outwith registration

4.0 NEED FOR A REVIEW

- 4.1 There are significant pressures on the service to looked after and accommodated children due to the trend in increasing numbers.
- 4.2 The National Standards require Local Authorities to provide registerable services to the same requirements as the voluntary and private sector and given the age of the current residential units it is clear that they will fail to meet the physical standards within the required timescale.
- 4.3 Given the combination of new Standards and increased demand for service, this would be an appropriate point to conduct a review of service which would agree the strategic direction for services for looked after and accommodated children.

5.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

5.1 It is recommended that Members of the Social Work Committee:

- i) support the recommendation for a Best Value Review on services for looked after and accommodated children and;
- ii) refer the matter to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services
29 August 2003
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

For further information regarding this report please contact Bill Eadie, Principal Officer, children and Families and Criminal Justice Services, Council Offices, Civic Centre, Kilmarnock. (Tel 01563 576728).

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : BILL EADIE