

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Interim Director of Shadow Health & Social Care Partnership

Shadow Integrated Joint Board: 21st May 2014

Subject: Residential Children's Units Rationalisation Study.

1 Purpose

- 1.1** To provide Members with information regarding the proposal to carry out a rationalisation study of the Children's Units within West Dunbartonshire.
- 1.2** There is provision of £6 million built into the Council's Capital plan for new build children's Units for 2021 to 2023. This study is required to inform the future model and provision level that will be required in order to effectively plan to meet this commitment.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to note the content of this report and agree that the progress of the study will be reported back to Committee within the next year.

3 Background

- 3.1** West Dunbartonshire has for a number of years now provided residential accommodation for looked after and accommodated children (LAAC) through the provision of four separate stand alone establishments.
- 3.2** Three of these establishments sit within the boundary of West Dunbartonshire and one sits just over the boundary in Rhu, within Argyll and Bute. At local government reorganisation in 1996 the decision was taken that this unit would remain within the provision for West Dunbartonshire and this has remained the case to date.
- 3.3** All four units are registered with the Care Inspectorate and are subject to regular inspections. Three units are registered to take the maximum of 8 children and young people and one is for six. However whilst we could legitimately provide care for up to 30 children we aim to accommodate 24 children at any one time, six in each unit. To go above this number requires children to share rooms which is not ideal.
- 3.4** The focus over the past two years has been to improve the quality of care and leadership across all areas that are inspected by the Care Inspectorate. We have a target to achieve grade 5 (Very Good) across all Units for all themes by 2017. To date we are pleased to report a consistently improving picture across all units with those who have achieved grades of 5 (Very Good) maintaining these and in some cases exceeding these to achieve grade 6

(Excellent) in some themes. One of the Units had lagged behind with grades of 3 (Adequate) but in the last two inspections achieved Grade 4 (Good) for all themes covered. We are confident therefore that we are able to impact positively on the quality of care that we provide and outcomes we achieve for the children and young people.

4 Main Issues

Occupancy Rates.

- 4.1** It is important that as we move forward in developing and sustaining this provision for the children and young people of West Dunbartonshire that we are able to reflect on the changes and shifts in occupancy rates and take on board the likely impact of current and future changes in expectation in terms of the policy landscape.
- 4.2** To this effect we will be completing a study of occupancy rates across the past three years to provide a clear analysis of demand, the peaks and troughs at differing times of the year and the potential causal factors for these. This will be based on the optimum rate across the four units being 24, but will note when we have fallen below this and the times when we have gone above this number.
- 4.3** We will also be looking at the numbers placed within Residential School provision during the same period as there is often some connectivity with this population and some young people who can be difficult to maintain safely within a children's unit can then be placed within a residential school setting. It should be noted that whilst children's units are provided in house, residential schools are independent and usually more costly than our own provision.

Service Requirements and Outcomes

- 4.4** Within this provision we have a very good track record in respect of assessing and meeting children's health needs. This is met through the provision of a specialist LAAC nurse and the support from Young People In Mind (YPIM). We know however that this is often a very vulnerable group who often fare less well than the general population despite the supports that are made available to them.
- 4.5** There are direct linkages with our service provision in Through Care and Youth Services for this population given that we have a statutory duty to provide support to young people leaving care and often issues with behaviour, offending and family breakdown lead to the young person requiring to be accommodated.
- 4.6** This study will also therefore take into account the merits of the supports in place and examine if there are any gaps in services provision for this population.

- 4.7** We have recently been undertaking an exercise to understand the demand for external, often independent, day placement provision as a direct alternative to main stream school as there are a significant number of children in West Dunbartonshire educated through this provision. An aspect of this work is to examine what unmet need we may have in our own education and care services within West Dunbartonshire that could have a positive impact on bringing the demand for external placements down. This may also inform some of the modelling in respect of the future of residential care in West Dunbartonshire.

Legislative and Policy Implications

- 4.8** With the introduction of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 there are some significant changes to our duty in terms of both age range and provision. In brief these include:
- One of the biggest changes arising from this Act is on through care and aftercare. This culminated in December with a Government proposal for care leavers to be given the right to remain in care until the age of 21 from 2015/16.
 - The duty to provide Through Care support to those leaving care is extended to the age of 25, at present our duty extends to the age of 21.
 - The Government also indicated that they wanted to explore whether eligibility for aftercare should include not just young people who are in care at the age of 16 but also those who are in care for at least 2 years from the age of 11. This work will take place within a review group that will last for approximately one year.
 - The Government has also considered how to implement a policy for the Right to Return to Care. This amendment was submitted at the last minute by a number of lobbying groups. In real terms this would mean that whilst a young person may have left care at some point before 21 there would be an ability/or duty to provide care and accommodation for them again before the age of 21. The Government is publicly committed to implementing this policy over the next 10-12 years and took order making power within the Bill to allow this policy to be implemented in the future.

5 People Implications

- 5.1** There are no people implications at this point in time. Should these arise this will be covered in future reports.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1** There are no financial implications at present however in respect of the new duties and requirements arising from the Children and Young People's (Sc)

Act as outlined at 4.8 there is still a lack of clarity on what additional funding will accompany the implementation of the Act.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1** The main issue for consideration in terms of risk analysis is in respect of the ability to continue to receive positive inspection grades as well as the provision of service being set at the right level to meet anticipated demand.

8 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** Not required for this report.

9 Consultation

- 9.1** Not required for this report.

10 Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The Council's Strategic Plan 2012-17 identifies "improve life chances for children and young people" as one of the authority's five strategic priorities.



Keith Redpath
Director of Shadow Health & Social Care Partnership
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Person to Contact: Jackie Irvine
Head of Children's Health, Care & Criminal Justice
Services
West Dunbartonshire Community Health & Care
Partnership, West Dunbartonshire CHCP HQ, West
Dunbartonshire Council, Garshake Road, Dumbarton,
G82 3PU.
E-mail: jackie.irvine@ggc.scot.nhs.uk
Telephone: 01389 737753

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All