

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1

06 NOVEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

REMODELLING CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL SERVICES PROJECT

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To inform Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 of the work that has been undertaken as part of the Remodelling Children's Residential Services project, and to introduce a proposed new model for Children's Residential Services.

2.0 Connection to Corporate Plan

2.1 This report links to the following improvement priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
- Smarter use of resources.

Plus the following background document:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

3.0 Background

3.1 The Children's Social Services Directorate currently provides residential placements for looked after children through two homes located within the County Borough. These are:

- Sunnybank – a four bed home for children aged 11-16
- Newbridge House – a transition unit for young people aged 15-17. This consists of four residential bedrooms and two bedsits that act as a step-down before move-on from the property.

3.2 The Directorate also provides an internal supported lodgings service to young people in Bridgend. This acts as an option for people who are ready to be more independent, but are not yet ready to live completely independently. The Supporting People Programme Grant currently funds an internal Supported Lodging Service which is currently being reviewed in line with Supporting People Grant conditions, to assess service delivery, eligibility and value-for-money in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. Currently £69,000 is funded which is subject to review on the criteria above.

3.3 The Council currently spends a significant amount of money on high-cost out of county residential placements for young people – with the average out of county placement costing in the region of £160,000 per annum. In respect of numbers of placements, on average, more than 10 young people have been placed out-of-county at any one time over the last few years.

- 3.4 In light of these issues, the Remodelling Children's Residential Services project was formed as part of the Remodelling Children's Services Programme. The remit of the project was to review current residential placements (to include Residential homes, Supported Lodgings and out-of-county placements) and to develop a proposal for remodelling internal residential placements. Alternative options considered included commissioning the service and building a bespoke building, but this option was discarded due to prohibitive costs and timescales for implementation.
- 3.5 Significant background research and analysis has been undertaken in order to review the current provision in Bridgend, and to establish examples of best practice across the UK – the feedback from which has been refined and used to help inform the proposed new model.
- 3.6 This review has identified a need for a wider variety of internal placement options that are flexible enough to meet the increasingly complex needs of the children and young people becoming looked after. Creating more placement options will enable the council to choose the right placement, achieve the best outcomes for each child and keep them closer to home instead of placing out-of-county. It will also reduce the pressure on placements currently being experienced and will ensure the right placement option is chosen for each young person.
- 3.7 A multi-agency workshop took place in May 2017 involving colleagues from Children's Services, ABMU, Police, Education and other key stakeholders to shape a potential new model for Children's Residential Care within Bridgend. From this meeting, an 'ideal model' was created and formed the basis for shaping proposals moving forward.
- 3.8 Informal engagement has taken place with current service users, service leavers and staff members who may be impacted by any changes introduced in the form of face-to-face discussions, with the offer of follow-up meetings if needed. The feedback from this has fed directly into the model proposed, and has also enabled the service area to implement some immediate changes based on the feedback from young people themselves, including introducing wi-fi within the homes.
- 3.9 Targeted engagement with all pertinent stakeholders commenced in October 2017 and will feed into the final proposal that is presented to Cabinet for approval in January 2018. If approval of the proposed new model is given, the resulting changes to the Children's Homes Statements of Purpose will be presented to Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting for approval prior to implementation.

4.0 Current Situation

- 4.1 A diagram of the 'ideal model' on which the proposal is based has been attached as Appendix A for reference. The aim of the model is to create as many flexible placement options in line with each person's assessed care and support needs, demonstrating evidence-based, positive outcomes for each of the young people being supported. This will enable the service to adapt to the needs of the individual and encourage the achievement of the best possible outcomes for each young person. The model also aims to minimise the number of placement breakdowns occurring through giving staff the flexibility to access the right placement at the right time for each young person.

- 4.2 The model has been developed so that it can be implemented incrementally using existing resources. This means that savings will begin to be realised during the implementation phase, and will continue to be realised once implementation is complete. The cost-savings analysis which is currently being finalised is indicating that, once fully implemented, this model will result in long-term savings for the directorate – made primarily through more cost-effective placements.
- 4.3 It is not envisaged that this model will result in a significant change in the staffing levels required to deliver the services, thereby reducing the potential risk of redundancies. Some additional staff members will be required to deliver the model (as opposed to commissioning elements of the service on an ad hoc basis) and existing staff members may require a small change to their roles to enable them to deliver the model effectively – and staff have been and will continue to be engaged and consulted with throughout the process.

Key elements of the proposed new model

4.4 Residential Units

4.4.1 Feedback from staff has identified a number of issues with the way the homes are structured currently, including:

- A lack of control over resident ‘mix’ due to age restrictions of each home and lack of placement options
- No alternatives to residential placements for those with complex needs
- Insufficient move-on facilities resulting in longer residential placements than is necessary
- Young people who are not ready for transition being placed in Newbridge House as there are no other options available
- No emergency beds (cannot be used for emergency placements as this is not in the Statements of Purpose)
- Layout of the homes not encouraging a positive, psychologically informed environment
- Staff only able to provide minimal outreach support
- Lack of trust from the Courts in the services’ ability to achieve outcomes meaning a high level of Out Of County and IFA placements.
- Children being sent far away from their home area.

4.4.2 It is recommended that Children’s Services work with colleagues in Supporting People and Housing to explore options for a supported living service for both young looked after children, as well as those who are not looked after, available from the age of 16.

4.4.3 *The Hub*

The aim of the Hub should be to provide support in a time-effective way in order to facilitate move-on to one of the other placement options within the model. It is proposed that the Hub will:

- Be based at Newbridge House

- Consist of 4 short term/assessment beds and 2 emergency only beds which can be accessed for a maximum of 72 working hours.
- Be open to children and young people aged 11-17, giving residential managers the flexibility to ensure the 'mix' of young people is right, as opposed to being age restricted.
- Have therapeutic staff based at the Hub, and the project team are working with education colleagues in exploring the possibility of having on site education/training provided.
- Increase the amount of outreach support provided to children and young people, families and carers – with staff members available 24/7 to provide advice and support; this will minimise the chance of placement breakdowns.

There is an intention to employ two 'Residential Education Outreach Workers' who will provide structured support to the young people located at the Hub, with the aim of getting them out and engaged within their community.

4.4.4 *Medium-term Unit*

It is proposed that a medium-term unit is developed, that will be:

- Based at Sunnybank
- A 4 bed home for those who need a higher level of intensive support before moving on to one of the other placement options within the model.
- Open to children and young people aged 11-17, giving residential managers the flexibility to ensure the 'mix' of young people is right as opposed to age restricted.

It is proposed that the young people based at this Unit would have access to the Hub, including the therapeutic interventions and in-house education functions.

4.5 Supported Lodgings

4.5.1 Supported Lodgings is an in-house placement provision for young people who are not yet ready for independent living. It does not require the level of regulation that a fostering placement requires, but still gives the young person a more structured, family type environment prior to their transition into independence.

4.5.2 A joint commissioning exercise recently took place involving Children's Services and Supporting People and Housing services. As part of this collaborative commissioning exercise, an external organisation was recruited to review Social Services' Supported Lodgings provision. This impartial report highlighted operational difficulties and concerns in respect of value-for-money, and proposed an external supported lodgings service be commissioned.

4.5.3 Following the recommendations of the report, an external supported lodgings project has been developed with the purpose of providing accommodation to young people who are 16+ and are not of looked after status, to assist in the prevention of homelessness, and it is recommended that the necessary steps will be undertaken in-line with Contract Procedure Rules to enable young people aged 16+ who are of 'looked after' status to access this Supported Lodgings service before they turn 18.

4.6 Supported Living

- 4.6.1 The directorate would benefit from an increased amount of move-on accommodation for young looked after people residing in placements before they turn 18 years of age. This would reduce delays in transfers out of residential placements and reduce the pressure on residential placements that is currently being experienced. It would also help in preventing young looked after people from presenting as homeless on their 18th birthday in order to access housing.
- 4.6.2 Children's Services are working more closely with colleagues in Supporting People and Housing in order to undertake a joint commissioning exercise for a supported living service for both young looked after children, as well as those who are not looked after, available from the age of 16.
- 4.6.3 Placements will provide structured support for young looked after people who are not yet ready for independent living, preparing them for a move-on into the community.

4.7 Therapeutic services

- 4.7.1 The number of children requiring therapeutic support is increasing and as a result the directorate is spending an increasing amount on spot-purchasing therapeutic interventions for children. The total of this spend came to approximately £180k in the 2016/17 financial year, not including the directorate's contractual arrangement with Barnardo's which offers a specific support service to young people.
- 4.7.2 Initial scoping has taken place to consider alternative ways in which such support can be provided in the future. A consideration is that the directorate recruit an internal therapeutic staffing function to consist of a Clinical Psychologist and a Senior Practitioner Social Worker. In the future, this team could then expand to include placement support workers, and/or a therapist worker with a play therapy background.

4.8 Training

- 4.8.1 The consultation has identified that there are currently multiple approaches to the therapeutic and behavioural support models used across the directorate. The directorate will benefit from a consistent model used across all services. This would aid young people transitioning between placements by providing consistency of support, and would ensure the best possible outcomes are being achieved for each young person.
- 4.8.2 There will be cost benefits of delivering therapeutic support in-house as opposed to commissioning individual externally funded packages. This will also assist in streamlining therapeutic interventions to one therapeutic model.
- 4.8.3 As a result of a more consistent approach, all foster carers, staff and support workers across the directorate who carry out front-facing support with young people could be trained in the same therapeutic principles and intervention methods, which will help the directorate as a whole to support the increasing complexity of needs presenting.

4.8.4 It is proposed that, once a therapeutic staffing team has been employed, the directorate develops its own internal core training programme for front-line staff across the directorate. This will be a rolling 16-week programme and will bring foster carers, residential staff and social workers together to help them form relationships and inform each other's learning. Specialists will be brought in to deliver this rolling programme as required, but the majority will be delivered by internal staff resulting in overall cost reduction.

4.9 Transitional Carers

4.9.1 It is proposed that 4-6 Transitional Carers are recruited, who will provide a respite or emergency function if they do not have a placement. Three current foster carers have been identified as suitable for up-skilling to this level to support the new model, and it is proposed that three new sets of fostering households are recruited.

4.9.2 The Transitional Carers would act as a step-down for young people coming out of the residential units before being placed in a long-term family or independent placement. They will be therapeutically trained and therefore able to address any issues that occur as a result of a transition into a different environment, increasing the chances that the long-term placement will be successful and reducing multiple placement breakdowns and reliance on out-of-county placements.

4.9.3 The Transitional Carers would take a maximum of one placement (or one sibling group) at any time, and will provide intensive support for up to 24 weeks. They will work closely with the Therapeutic Team staff, who will advise on the best way to support the young people to maximise the benefits and success of future placements.

4.9.4 It is envisaged that 2 out of the 6 carers would be without placements at any one time, enabling them to provide support to the other 4 Transitional Carers, respite for foster carers that need a break to prevent a crisis from occurring, and to provide emergency family placements if needed.

5.0 Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules. Any future services requiring commissioning as a result of this proposal will be undertaken in-line with Contract Procedure Rules requirements.

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 When targeted consultation has been completed and the model has been finalised, and officers are in a better position to know which service users and staff could be affected by the proposed model, an EIA screening (and a full EIA if necessary) will be undertaken, to assess the potential impact on service users and staff.

6.2 Appropriate consultation will be arranged ensuring that relevant policies are applied throughout the process.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Implementing this model will facilitate the return of young people currently placed out of county. A comparison of the average placement costs is detailed below:

Placement type	Average cost per placement per annum
Out-of-county	£160,000
Residential placement (new model)	£100,000
Transitional Carer placement (new model)	£34,000
Supported Lodgings (new model)	£9,000
Supported Living (new model)	TBC

7.2 This remodelling work will contribute towards the MTFS budget reductions that have been applied to Children's Services over the past three years, resulting in current projected overspends:

MTFS	TOTAL
CH25 Reduction in Safeguarding LAC	£617k
CH22 Remodelling Children's Residential Care	£400k

7.3 It is anticipated that having an in-county provision will offer cost savings against existing high-cost OOC placements, as well as enabling a reduction in the dependence on high-cost placements in future years.

7.4 It is also anticipated that there may be potential for income generation from neighbouring local authorities in the future.

7.5 In implementing the new model, it is anticipated that there may be potential for funding from the Supporting People funding. However, any bids for funding will be made in-line with the Supporting People planning and governance processes and grant conditions, and in the knowledge that Supporting People funding could reduce over time, dependent on the grant allocation received from Welsh Government.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

- Note the information contained in this report;
- Provide views on the proposed new model for residential placements;
- Note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet, requesting approval to implement the proposed new models for residential placements.

Susan Cooper

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10.0 Contact Officers

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11.0 **Background documents** None

Placement options under the new model

