
To: Education and Children Policy Board

On: 12 May 2016

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Proposed developments in residential care provision

1. Summary

- 1.1. Residential child care refers to the service provided within our children's houses, and is a form of accommodation for children who require to be cared for out with a family setting. Residential care is provided by Renfrewshire Council when the specific needs of children and young people means that they cannot remain living with their parents or in an alternative family setting like kinship or foster care.
- 1.2. Renfrewshire has radically reviewed and upgraded its residential estate over the course of the last decade by reducing the number of registered placements provided from 58 to 33, investing in two state of the art houses and launching the Philosophy of Care which is a relationship and trauma informed method of intervention.
- 1.3. Renfrewshire currently has 5 residential children's houses. At the present time there are 28 children and young people accommodated across these establishments.
- 1.4. Renfrewshire Council is committed to reducing the overall number of accommodated children whilst at the same time developing fit for purpose, high quality services and accommodation for children and young people who require it. These ambitions are being realised with the development of 2 new purpose designed children's units and through care resource and the introduction of a range of evidence based programmes. We have also continued to recruit foster carers to provide family based care and have successfully reduced our reliance on external foster care providers.
- 1.5. Notwithstanding the achievements in this area, Renfrewshire continues to place a small number of children in external residential care placements. External provision is used where the needs of the young person are complex and cannot be managed within our internal resource, or where it is in the young person's best interests to be accommodated in another location away from previous social contacts.

- 1.6. Renfrewshire Council is committed to caring for our children within the Renfrewshire area and within resources that are suited to meet their needs, so we would prefer not to place children in external resources unless there is no other option. Our continuous review of residential provision has highlighted a gap in our current service provision which is contributing to children needing to be placed in external provision. This gap relates to our ability to care for children and young people who require the highest levels of staffing support and small group living arrangements.
- 1.7. It is also noted that as we have developed community based resources to support children and families we have experienced a reduction in demand for beds within our residential houses. We currently have 5 vacancies across the residential houses and this was a sustained trend throughout 2015.
- 1.8. While we anticipate that there may always be a small number of young people whose needs are best met out with Renfrewshire, we believe that with the right resource we would be better placed to meet those needs within Renfrewshire. The development of services to date means that we have both the capacity and the opportunity to develop a more specialist resource which will reduce our reliance on placing our most complex and challenging children in external residential resources.
- 1.9. This report outlines a proposal to develop a Close Support model of care within Renfrewshire. The concept of close support is based around the recognition that some young people who enter residential child care require to be placed in a smaller group with higher staff to young people ratios. Initially this close support approach would be developed within one of our existing Children's Houses whilst a purpose designed resource is built. None of our current houses are designed to provide the type of support that we are aspiring to deliver.
- 1.10. It is proposed that the approach would begin to be developed in Roneil Children's House and that once the new purpose designed resource has been built, Roneil would be closed. This is in recognition of the fact that our mainstream residential resources are currently being underutilised and Roneil continues to be our largest children's house with the property being the least fit for purpose.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Members of the Board are asked to
 - a) Note the progress being made within children's services to deliver high quality services and accommodation for children and young people.
 - b) Approve the development of a Close Support model of care as outlined in the report.
 - c) Note the decision of the Leadership Board in December 2015 to approve the construction of new build accommodation to house the new service; and agree that the capital plan be amended to reflect the build costs.

- d) Approve the closure of Roneil Children's House following the transfer of the Close Support service to new build accommodation.
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3. Background

- 3.1. Local authorities have a duty to secure the welfare and protection of children and young people in their care and as corporate parents should look after the young people as any other parent would look after their own child. A number of children in Renfrewshire require to be accommodated in local authority care. In most situations we try to place these children with foster carers however this is not always possible due to carer availability or appropriate due to the needs of the young person. In these circumstances we place children in children's residential houses. Residential care can make a real and positive difference to the lives of children.
- 3.2. How we care for accommodated children now and in the future is arguably one of the greatest challenges the public sector faces. Renfrewshire Council has made significant improvements to this area of service delivery over the past decade. We have built two new Children's Houses, established a purpose designed Throughcare resource for young people leaving care and also significantly increased our internal foster carer resource.
- 3.3. In addition to improving and increasing our resources we have invested significantly in the staff who care for our accommodated children within our residential houses. This was achieved by commissioning the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children (CELCIS) to deliver bespoke training to our residential care staff and to assist us with developing the "Philosophy of Care" that underpins our work with children and young people in our children's houses.
- 3.4. The Philosophy of Care within Renfrewshire's residential houses was developed in the recognition that most of the young people placed in our houses have experienced varying degrees of trauma and as a consequence of this will display difficult behaviour. Staff have been trained to understand the feelings and meaning behind the behaviour to respond appropriately. As a consequence of this training staff understand that many of these young people have missed out on fundamental nurturing and as a consequence, function at well below their chronological age. The success of this approach was recently recognised at a national level as Renfrewshire Residential Houses won the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care 2015 award for *Reaching Higher*.
- 3.5. Renfrewshire currently has 5 residential children's houses: Roneil, Longcroft, Beech Avenue, Arkleston and Barochan. Arkleston and Barochan are the two new purpose-built facilities. Longcroft and Beech Avenue provide good family sized accommodation well integrated into the local community. Roneil is a large detached B listed property from the early 1900's. A building of this age and design requires significant ongoing maintenance and does not reflect the change in philosophy over time to the advantages of looking after the young people in smaller groups more akin to a family setting.
- 3.6. There was a noticeable trend in 2015 in decreased demand for beds and this has continued into 2016. We started 2015 with no vacancies but by March averaged 3 per week. This peaked in May with a week of having 9 vacancies.

We currently have 5 vacancies across the residential houses. The reasons for this do not relate to a single cause; increased community based initiatives such as Functional Family Therapy and Intensive Family Support are likely to have played and will continue to play a significant role in reducing this demand and are also part of our strategy to reduce the overall number of accommodated children.

- 3.7. Currently there are small numbers of young people at any given time who present to Children's Services with a range of difficult behaviours. These young people have normally experienced high levels of neglect or abuse. These are the young people who require the highest levels of support but are unable to sustain or be sustained in a family, or within our mainstream residential provision. Often, they spend periods of time in Secure Accommodation.
- 3.8. External provision is used where the needs of the young person are complex and cannot be managed within our children's houses due to them requiring a higher staffing ratio or a smaller group living situation. It may also be in the young person's best interests to be accommodated in another location away from previous social contacts. The cost of the current external provision is significant and is in excess of £2M per annum.
- 3.9. Renfrewshire is committed to caring for children within the area wherever possible and there has been considerable focus over recent years on reducing our reliance on external residential resources as we believe children and young people achieve better outcomes when they remain in local resources. Notwithstanding our commitment to keeping children in Renfrewshire, there are occasions that we place some children externally due to being unable to provide them with the kind of care they require. A review of the reasons for placing the majority of these children has highlighted that in most instances we have done this mainly to achieve a smaller group living situation and a higher staff to child ratio.
- 3.10. Frequently these young people are in receipt of services from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, require bespoke Education supports and also require high levels of contact with their Social Workers in order to ensure that their care plan is progressing. Placing children outwith the authority can often impact negatively on our ability to ensure seamless access to all of the supports they require. This inability to deliver Renfrewshire based care to our most vulnerable young people has been identified as a significant gap in our current service provision. It is believed that an alternative delivery model could deliver better outcomes for the young people involved and also provide greater value for money.
- 3.11. It is our view that the next stage of our development of Children's residential services should be the development of a "close support" model of care within a purpose designed resource.
- 3.12. The concept of close support is based around recognition that some young people who enter residential child care require to be placed in a smaller group living situation with higher young people / staff ratios. Fundamentally, Close Support would provide an environment where this reparative nurturing and growth could take place. The high staff / young person ratio and the small group would allow more one to one work to take place and give more opportunity for resilience building opportunities. Currently Renfrewshire

Council has no facility to provide this Close Support internally and we continue to place our most challenging and vulnerable young people with external providers because our existing internal resource is not set up to meet their needs. Any specialist support such as psychology/counselling services is purchased as and when required, at a significant additional cost.

- 3.13. A Close Support model of care is based on providing young people with intensive levels of support from staff who are experienced and trained in working alongside young people with complex and challenging behaviours. The close support service will provide care for a maximum of 4 young people. The staffing ratio will be 1 member of staff for every 2 young people with this increasing to 1:1 at particular times. In addition to care staff, the model will be developed to include additional staff that will bring specialist knowledge in terms of psychological and educational support as it is our intention to recruit a qualified teacher and a psychologist to form part of the core staff team. In addition we will attach an additional member of staff to work specifically with the young people on their life skills and social confidence.
- 3.14. As outlined previously within this report, the majority of our care staff have received bespoke training in our “ Philosophy of Care” but it is envisaged that the staff who will be based in the Close Support Service will be our most experienced staff and will receive enhanced training in interventions to support children with the most challenging and complex behaviour.
- 3.15. The specialist staff of the Close Support Unit will be available to work across all residential units undertaking assessments regarding the need to move them into / out of close support and undertaking early intervention and preventative work to stop behaviours escalating to the point that they require close support or secure care. Furthermore, when the Close Support Unit is at capacity the specialist staff will work across the service to prevent placement breakdowns within the mainstream houses and to assist young people to transition back to their family of origin where this is appropriate.
- 3.16. A new building will be required for the close support model of service delivery as none of our current children's houses are fit to provide this due to the size of the properties concerned. All bar one of our current children's houses are 6 / 7 bedded and as outlined above the maximum recommended number of young people will be 4. The physical environment of the close support service will be purpose designed accommodation which will promote a feeling of safety and security for the young people who will live there. Each young person will have their own bedroom with ensuite facilities and the communal living areas will be spacious and open plan to ensure positive behaviour management.
- 3.17. The Close Support new accommodation will be funded from prudential borrowing underpinned by resources released from the existing service budgets. It is envisaged the new service revenue costs will be fully funded from existing children's residential budgets; with the reduced use of external providers generating savings.
- 3.18. As the last remaining 8 bedded children's house, Roneil is an older, large property in substantial grounds which originally provided accommodation to 12 children. The size of the property no longer fits with the model of care we are aspiring to deliver and although the interior is homely, the size of the property and how the interior is configured means that it is not viable to

reduce the number of children placed there in the longer term. Furthermore they have significant running costs associated Roneil due to the maintenance an older building requires and its listed building status.

- 3.19. It would be our intention to minimise the disruption to the young people currently living in Roneil whilst we develop a close support approach and then close Roneil when we move to the new purpose built resource. The majority of the young people currently living in Roneil will move to some form of independent living over the next 12 - 24 months, due to their age and stage. As capacity within Roneil naturally occurs as young people move on this will allow us to begin to develop the close support model of care by reducing numbers and placing young people there who require higher staff / young person ratios and then transfer them to the new resource once built.
- 3.20. Each young person will have an individualised care plan which supports them to move on positively from Roneil or transfer to the new close support resource if this is their assessed need. We will continue to work with Who Cares? Scotland the advocacy service for young people who are looked after and accommodated to ensure the views of each young person is taken account of during this transition.
- 3.21. Although this report recommends that Roneil is closed once the new purpose designed close support resource has been built there are no implications for any existing staff within our children's houses as all current employees will have a job once the closure of Roneil has been completed.
- 3.22. Renfrewshire Council is committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for all Renfrewshire's children but particularly for its most vulnerable. The development of a close support resource will ensure better outcomes for children and more efficient use of Council resources. The establishment of a close support resource within Renfrewshire will ensure that our most vulnerable young people are placed in a resource that provides a safe structured nurturing environment with intensive supports to improve life-skills, educational attainment, and self-esteem. Our use of expensive out of authority external resources will be significantly reduced and young people would have better opportunities to maintain links in their local area in terms of contact with Family and Friends, Access to Education, Employment and Training.

Implications of this report

1. Financial Implications

The Close Support new accommodation will be funded from prudential borrowing underpinned by resources released from the existing service budgets. It is envisaged the new service revenue costs will be fully funded from existing children's residential budgets; with the reduced use of external providers generating savings.

2. HR and Organisational Development Implications

There are no implications for existing staff. Some recruitment will be required for the specialist staff who will be attached to the close support

resource.

3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications

Children and Young People	- Providing good quality care is central to ensuring that the most vulnerable children in Renfrewshire are provided with an opportunity to be cared for in a safe and nurturing environment.
Community Care, Health and Well-being	- None
Empowering our Communities	- None
Safer and Stronger	- Providing children and young people with safe, supportive and nurturing placements, increases the likelihood of them becoming effective citizens who contribute productively to the communities in which they live

4. Legal Implications None.

5. Property/Assets Implications A new purpose designed and built resource will be required. Once Roneil has been closed it will be placed for sale on the open market.

6. Information Technology Implications None.

7. Equality and Human Rights Implications

- (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website. (Report author to arrange this).

8. Health and Safety Implications None.

9. Procurement Implications None.

10. Risk Implications

If we do not implement the changes outlined in this report we are at risk of additional expense by continuing to need to place children externally. This is much more costly and often leads to poorer outcomes for individual children

11. Privacy Impact

List of Background Papers

- (a) Background Papers : None

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