

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE – 28TH JANUARY 2013

REPORT ON: REDEVELOPMENT OF ELMS SECURE RESIDENTIAL SERVICE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 39 - 2013

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 In June 2012 Social Work and Health Committee considered a number of reports, (Reports 240-12, 241-12) in relation to the Elms Secure Service. Committee agreed to closure of the secure unit and to a change of use to create further intake provision for young people requiring residential care. The Director of Social Work was tasked with establishing a Multi Agency Development Group to progress the development led by the Head of Children's Services and Criminal Justice Services.

This report provides an update on work undertaken specifically in relation to developing services which will support closure of the Elms minimising the need for secure care and making recommendations for future use of the facility.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee is asked to approve the following recommendations;

- 2.1 Note the work being undertaken to strengthen multi agency approaches to minimise the need for secure care.
- 2.2 Approve change of use for the Elms to an open residential unit
- 2.3 Instruct the Director of Social Work to report back to committee in February 2013 with proposals to extend the Department's fostering capacity.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The potential net revenue saving of resettling up to four children to a new service at the former Elms Secure Unit is anticipated to be approximately £654,000 in a full financial year. The cost of staffing at the former Elms unit is already included within the Social Work Department's Revenue Budget therefore no additional costs of service provision will be incurred.
- 3.2 The Capital costs required to convert the unit from a secure to a residential setting is estimated to be £485,000 and provision for this has been made in the Capital Plan.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

- 4.1 The recommendations are based on the work of a Multi Agency Group which was chaired by Social Work and included representation from Education, including Educational Psychology Service, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Tayside Police, Children's Rights Officer and Includem (a commissioned service which works with young people assessed as being at risk of secure accommodation) The Group met on 3 occasions with 1 meeting taking place at The Elms. Education and Social Work also held an additional meeting. The Group looked at the current profile of Looked after Children in Dundee and also had a specific input on Children with Disabilities.

4.2 In terms of the current profile of looked after and accommodated children there are currently 87 children in external foster placements and 21 in external residential placements. In addition there are 2 young people in external secure care, typically these will be 5/6 young people in secure care at anyone time. Although numbers are small these young people will tend to have very complex needs, present a variety of risks and most will have experienced several alternative care placements before being admitted to secure care.

4.3 It was agreed that, wherever possible, agencies should work collectively to ensure that more young people remain in Dundee and a recognition that there is a need to develop more co-ordinated support to looked after and accommodated children in order to enable residential units and foster carers to safely hold onto young people who are experiencing difficulties thus minimising the need for secure care.

The following developments have been agreed:

- A named educational psychologist will be linked to each residential unit, primarily to support staff in their work with vulnerable young people.
- An educational psychologist will be linked to the adoption and permanence panel and will provide input to training kinship and foster carers.
- There will be greater joint working between staff in education and the residential units to help identify and remove barriers to learning.
- There will be greater input from Community Adolescent Mental Health Services with more operational involvement with appropriate young people. A programme of joint training with carers/residential staff around trauma is being developed.
- There will be greater joint training of residential staff and foster carers. A new training strategy for staff in residential child care which looks at a more holistic and strength based approach to childcare, concentrating on communication, building self esteem and meaningful relationships is being progressed and this will be delivered jointly with foster carers as part of their new training strategy.

4.4 Approaches to young people who present risk taking behaviour could be improved to ensure that they are as well developed across the city as they are for young people who commit offences; consequently the Youth Justice Partnership has agreed to adapt its terms of reference to ensure consistent co-ordination and oversight to all vulnerable adolescents, including offenders and others at risk. A review of existing multi agency approaches has also been undertaken to consider the needs of those young people who present risk taking behaviour. The existing multi agency arrangements for offenders have contributed towards sustained reductions in youth crime over the last 7 years and this approach could be extended to include vulnerable adolescents. It has therefore been proposed that the remit of the Early and Effective Intervention Group (EEI) which currently focuses on low level offenders only, will be extended to include adolescents with wider problematic behaviours which do not meet child protection thresholds. It has further been proposed that the Care and Risk Management Group (CRMG) which currently focuses on young people presenting inappropriate sexual behaviour is extended to young people who place themselves at risk. These multi agency meetings will determine how to deploy the existing Intensive Support and Monitoring Service currently delivered by Includem most effectively as part of community alternatives to secure accommodation. In addition internal Social Work procedures will be altered to ensure that Chief Social Work Officer Authorisation of placement in secure accommodation will only be considered after discussion at a Care and Risk Management meeting. These changes will ensure a more co-ordinated multi agency approach to the needs and risks presented by these young people and will be the subject of on-going discussion with decision makers such as Children's Panel members.

4.5 These proposals represent significant changes in processes, designed to transfer some of the successful learning from youth justice to the issue of young people who exhibit risk taking behaviour. However there also needs to be a review of how the Integrated Children's Services workforce is deployed to ensure that at every stage of intervention there is a timely and proportionate response in line with the aims of GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) as the steady and increasing growth in the number of Looked After Children in Dundee suggests that there is scope to improve existing preventative measures in order to find

solutions for young people prior to them becoming Looked After. This is being progressed through the on-going Best Value Review of Children's Services.

- 4.6 Although the Social Work Department has increased the number of internal foster carers the increase has not been sufficient to meet current demand and there is a shortage of carers for adolescents. A review of the existing ACE Carer Scheme (Alternative Community Experience aimed at young people at risk of secure accommodation) is currently underway and a working group has been established to consider what steps are needed to increase the number of internal foster carers in line with projected demand. Detailed proposals will be available by February 2013.
- 4.7 New admissions to the Elms ceased in November 2012 and all the existing residents have now progressed from the unit.

The working group agreed that priority consideration should be given to returning young people placed externally to more localised resources therefore the proposal is that the Elms becomes an open residential unit, initially with a focus on returning young people from out of authority placements. The Unit can be upgraded reasonably quickly and initial discussions have taken place with the Care Inspectorate in order to progress this. Work is underway to identify appropriate young people and to address the training and development needs of the existing staff group.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in terms of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and will be made available on the Council website <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/equanddiv/equimpact/>

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services and members of the Elms working group have been consulted in preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Reports to Social Work Committee 240-12, 241-12.