

**REPORT TO:** CITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**REPORT ON:** CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**REPORT BY:** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

**REPORT NO:** 68 - 2025

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides the City Governance Committee with details of continued measures to reconfigure and improve support to vulnerable families and care experienced children and young people which will facilitate savings and avoid longer-term costs.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a Approves continued measures to reconfigure and improve support to vulnerable families and care experienced children and young people, which will also achieve a saving of £1.412m in 2025-26.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 This proposal will contribute towards the Council continuing to operate within budget in 2025-26. The plan and targets will be overseen by fortnightly data on the number and profile of care experienced children and young people alongside associated costs.

## **4 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Since the publication of the Independent Care Review in February 2020, the Council has been embarking on a programme of transformational change in the way we provide support to vulnerable families and care experienced children and young people.
- 4.2 Initiatives like New Beginnings, Pause, Safe and Together, Social Work/NHST Nurse teams, Functional Family Therapy, audits of practice and workforce development have been designed to improve support to parents/carers and promote nurturing care.
- 4.3 They have contributed towards a minimum of 5% annual reductions in the total number of children and young people requiring alternative care from 450 in July 2020 to 385 in July 2024 and reductions in the total gross expenditure from £28.9m in 2020-21 to £26.2m in 2023-24.
- 4.4 At the same time, other initiatives to build local care capacity and reduce an over-reliance on external care have also been introduced, such as a new Kinship Team, a new Young Person's House and new or re-provisioned supported accommodation for care leavers.
- 4.5 This has contributed towards a marked reduction in an average of 31 children and young people in external residential care over the last 5 years to a current 21 and only 1 young person in secure care over the last 20 months.
- 4.6 Over the period, the gross expenditure on family-based care has therefore reduced from £14.2m to £12.8m. For residential care, it has dropped from £14.7m to £13.3m. The balance of family-based care is currently 91%, above the national average of 89%.

- 4.7 In tandem with these developments, targeted support in schools has also been enhanced and the proportion of care experienced young people achieving SCQF Level 5 or above has increased by 24% and the proportion achieving SCQF Level 6 or above by 20%.

## **5 Further Developments**

- 5.1 In Our Promise to Care Experienced Children and Young People 2023-26, the Council has committed to maintaining this ambitious programme to support vulnerable families, improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people and reduce costs by:
- Allocation of Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Funding of £3.4m to 16 new projects up to March 2026
  - A review of current Children's Social Work commissioned services which currently cost a combined total of £2.3m to ensure they provide Best Value
- 5.2 Given sustained reductions in the number of children and young people living with internal Foster Carers, which has declined from 144 in 2020 to a current 89 and places restrictions on available capacity, it is also proposed that a formal review of fees/allowances is carried out.
- 5.3 The annual cost of these placements is £1.7m, compared with £4.4m for the same number of children and young people with external Foster Carers. A review would benchmark with private providers and neighbouring areas and may invite invest to save proposals.
- 5.4 These continued developments are intended to drive towards sustaining 5% annual reductions in the number of children and young people requiring alternative care and in increases in the number in local family-based or residential care.

## **6 Targets**

- 6.1 On the basis of long-term trends and these sustained or new measures, the total number of care experienced children and young people would reduce by a minimum of 5% from the current 385 to 365 in 2025-26; 347 in 2026-27; and 340 in 2027-28.
- 6.2 Similarly, the number in external residential care would reduce by a minimum of 3 per year over the same period, from the current 21 to 18 in 2025-26; 15 in 2026-27; and 12 in 2027-28. Efforts to minimise the number of young people in secure care will be maintained.
- 6.3 It is anticipated that this continued re-balance will achieve a further reduction in costs by £1.412m in 2025-26. As services are demand-led and subject to some volatility, such as a large group of siblings requiring alternative care, targets will be continually monitored. Other mitigations include:
- Maintaining capacity within Social Work teams to provide and/or coordinate necessary support to parents/carers and children and young people
  - Routine internal and partnership self-evaluation on types and levels of risk of harm, thresholds of intervention and identification of any unmet need
  - Continuing to expand available support to Kinship Carers which currently includes Welfare Rights assessments and support from a network of local services.
- 6.4 The proposed review of commissioned services and internal Foster Carer fees/allowances would also provide opportunities to enhance and/or appropriately target preventative support and build the availability of local family-based care.

**7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 This report has been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment to identify impacts on Equality & Diversity, Fairness & Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. An impact, positive or negative, on one or more of these issues was identified. An appropriate senior manager has checked and agreed with this assessment. A copy of the Integrated Impact Assessment showing the impacts and accompanying benefits of / mitigating factors for them is included as an Appendix to this report.

**8 CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its content.

**9 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 None.

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# Integrated Impact Assessment

Committee Report Number: 68-2025

Document Title: Care experienced children and young people

Document Type: Strategy

**Description:**

This report outlines measures designed to continue to improve support to vulnerable families and children and young people who require alternative care whilst also reducing costs and contributing towards the Council operating within budget. The primary focus is service improvement which also entails cost benefits.

**Intended Outcome:**

The intended outcomes are to reduce the overall number of care experienced children and young people; increase the number in local family-based or residential care where alternative arrangements are required; maintain links with local communities, schools, families and peers; improve educational attainment; and reduce costs.

Period Covered: 27/02/2025 to 27/03/2026

**Monitoring:**

The service delivery and financial aspects of the proposal will be monitored through fortnightly data on the number of children and young people requiring alternative care, the balance of local versus external care arrangements and associated costs. Related developments will be monitored through weekly management meetings.

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# **Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**

## **Impacts & Implications**

### **Age: Positive**

The proposal outlines a range of additional supports to parents/carers, extended family and children and young people, all of which are designed to promote local stable nurturing care.

### **Disability: Positive**

As families with children and young people who have a disability are at greater risk of poverty and associated needs, they will also benefit from additional supports outlined in the report, including enhanced opportunities to remain in local care arrangements if alternatives are required.

### **Gender Reassignment: Not Known**

It is not known whether and to what extent the proposal will impact on gender reassignment but services will continue to operate suitably individualised anti-discriminatory approaches with parents/carers and children and young people.

### **Marriage & Civil Partnership: No Impact**

### **Pregnancy & Maternity: No Impact**

### **Race / Ethnicity: No Impact**

### **Religion or Belief: No Impact**

### **Sex: No Impact**

### **Sexual Orientation: No Impact**

Are any Human Rights not covered by the Equalities questions above impacted by this report?

Yes

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Scotland) Act 2024 outlines 54 Articles which include a right to live with parents unless it is bad for a child or young person (Article 9), a right to be brought up by parents if possible (Article 18) and a right to have the best care if living in care (Article 21).

The plan promotes compliance with the UNCRC Act and is also consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Independent Care Review, including the 5 foundations of The Promise of Voice; Family; Care; People and Scaffolding.

## **Fairness & Poverty**

### **Geographic Impacts & Implications**

Strathmartine:	Positive
Lochee:	Positive
Coldside:	Positive
Maryfield:	Positive
North East:	Positive
East End:	Positive
The Ferry:	Positive
West End:	Positive

**Positive Implications:** The proposal is designed to have a positive impact on all vulnerable families and care experienced children and young people regardless of their geographical location across the city.

## Household Group Impacts and Implications

**Looked After Children & Care Leavers: Positive**

The proposal is designed to both reduce the number of children and young people requiring alternative care and to re-balance the profile of local family-based or residential care versus external Foster Care and external residential care. The aim is to support local families and maximise locally available alternative care.

**Carers: Positive**

The proposal is designed to enhance support to parents/carers, including birth parents, kinship carers and foster carers, who may all have additional needs ranging from financial inclusion, substance use, mental health, parenting and domestic abuse.

**Lone Parent Families: Positive**

Where lone parent families require additional support, or where they have children or young people who may need alternative care, or where they wish to become a kinship carer or foster carer, they will benefit from these proposals.

**Single Female Households with Children: Positive**

Where single female households with children or young people who may require alternative care or where they wish to become a kinship carer or foster carer they will benefit from these proposals. Where single females are victims of or at risk of domestic abuse, they will continue to receive individualised support.

**Greater number of children and/or young children: Not Known**

This is not known.

**Pensioners - single / couple: Positive**

As pensioners, or grandparents, may already be or may become kinship carers or foster carers, they will benefit from the proposals in this report because they will receive continued and possibly additional support.

**Unskilled workers or unemployed: Positive**

As above

**Serious & enduring mental health problems: Positive**

As above

**Homeless: Positive**

As above

**Drug and/or alcohol problems: Positive**

As above

**Offenders & Ex-offenders: Positive**

As above

## Socio Economic Disadvantage Impacts & Implications

**Employment Status: Positive**

As above

**Education & Skills: Positive**

As above

**Income: Positive**

As above

# Socio Economic Disadvantage Impacts & Implications

Caring Responsibilities (including Childcare): Positive

As above

Affordability and accessibility of services: Positive

As above

Fuel Poverty: Positive

As above

Cost of Living / Poverty Premium: Positive

As above

Connectivity / Internet Access: Positive

As above

Income / Benefit Advice / Income MaximisationPositive

As above

Employment Opportunities: Positive

As above

Education: Positive

As above

Health: Positive

As above

Life Expectancy: Positive

As above

Mental Health: Positive

As above

Overweight / Obesity: Positive

As above

Child Health: Positive

As above

Neighbourhood Satisfaction: Not Known

This is not known but it is anticipated that the proposal would have a positive impact on family satisfaction, which if extended would help to generate general neighbourhood satisfaction

Transport: No Impact

## Environment

### Climate Change Impacts

Mitigating Greenhouse Gases: No Impact

Adapting to the effects of climate change: No Impact

## Resource Use Impacts

Energy efficiency & consumption: No Impact

Prevention, reduction, re-use, recovery or recycling of waste: No Impact

Sustainable Procurement: No Impact

## Transport Impacts

Accessible transport provision: No Impact

Sustainable modes of transport: No Impact

## Natural Environment Impacts

Air, land & water quality: No Impact

Biodiversity: No Impact

Open & green spaces: No Impact

## Built Environment Impacts

Built Heritage: No Impact

Housing: No Impact

Is the proposal subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

No further action is required as it does not qualify as a Plan, Programme or Strategy as defined by the Environment Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

## Corporate Risk

## Corporate Risk Impacts

Political Reputational Risk: Positive

The Council has committed to implementing Our Promise and aspires to deliver excellent support to vulnerable parents/carers and care experienced children and young people. The proposal will help to sustain progress.

Economic/Financial Sustainability / Security & Equipment: Positive

The proposal outlines measures designed to improve care and support which would also significantly reduce costs and contribute towards the Council continuing to operate within budget.

Social Impact / Safety of Staff & Clients: Positive

The proposal outlines enhanced support and includes mitigating actions relating to the identification of any unmet need or required practice improvement via routine internal and partnership self-evaluation activity.

Technological / Business or Service Interruption: No Impact



Environmental: No Impact

Legal / Statutory Obligations: Positive

The proposal promotes compliance with Integrated Children's Services and Corporate Parenting responsibilities outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the UNCRC (Scotland) Act 2024.

Organisational / Staffing & Competence: Positive

The proposal includes continued workforce learning and development activity and the re-design and/or re-focus of commissioned services to ensure they provide Best Value and focus on key priorities and family needs.

Corporate Risk Implications & Mitigation:

There are moderate levels of risk associated with the subject matter of this report. However, having undertaken a full analysis of the upside and downside risks there is a clear benefit in what is proposed and we are satisfied that adequate controls are available to mitigate the downside risks. The downside financial exposure to the Council is less than £250,000 and this together with other areas of risk can be effectively managed