

REPORT TO: CITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 5 MARCH 2026
REPORT ON: CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE
REPORT NO: 71-2026

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides the City Governance Committee with details of continued measures to ensure that care experienced children and young people remain in or are returned to local family-based care arrangements instead of external residential care.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a. Approves continued measures to reduce the number of care experienced children and young people in external residential care with recurring savings of £500k in 2026-27 and 2027-28.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Executive Director of Corporate Services has confirmed that the successful implementation of these recommendations would result in recurring savings of £500k for the Children & Families Services Revenue Budget.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Since the publication of the Independent Care Review, the Council has been embarking on a programme of transformational changes in the way we provide support to vulnerable families and care experienced children and young people.

4.2 Initiatives like New Beginnings, Pause, Social Work/NHST Nurse teams, Functional Family Therapy, Craigie Cottage Children's Home, Fairbairn House Supported Accommodation and Reid Square Supported Accommodation have enhanced local nurturing care.

4.3 Over the last 3 years, they have contributed to a 14% reduction in the total number of care experienced children and young people; a reduction in the number in external residential care from 41 to 19; and an increase in the proportion of family-based care from 85% to 91%.

4.4 As a result, the gross expenditure on family-based care has reduced from £14.2m to £12.8m and for residential care from £14.7m to £13.3m. The proportion achieving SCQF Level 5 or above has simultaneously increased by 24%.

5.0 Further Developments

5.1 In 2026-27, the Council will sustain this preventative strategy through the continued implementation of initiatives, such as the allocation of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF), the Whole Family Support programme and a review of commissioned services.

5.2 The Council is expanding support to Kinship Carers through a range of partnerships arrangements with other providers and introducing measures to increase the recruitment and retention of internal Foster Carers, each of which will increase local care capacity.

5.3 Over the next 12 months, it will also explore options to further expand the local residential care estate, including bespoke options for children and young people whose additional support needs cannot currently be met from existing arrangements.

6.0 Further Reductions

6.1 In the context of 3-year trends and further planned developments, it is proposed that the Council reduces the number of care experienced children and young people in external residential care from a current 19 to 17 in 2026-27.

6.2 This is a prudent target which recognizes that whilst measures to prevent or return children and young people are considered achievable, there may be occasions where the level of risk and need of others necessitates external residential care for others.

6.3 There are also risks associated with the Children's Hearing system not approving Children's Social Work assessments or recommendations in individual cases and instead stipulating as a statutory requirement that the Council needs to place some children and young people in external residential care.

6.4 Children and young people will be supported in accordance with child-centred principles which place their assessed needs and views at the centre of all decisions. Targets will be monitored via internal management meetings and fortnightly data.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The content of this report was previously considered in report 68-2025 and remains valid. The original report was subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has checked and agreed with this assessment.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

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