

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: July 17th 2013

Subject: Investing in looked after children – Part B residential child care provision.



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

A key priority for Leeds City Council as a Child Friendly City is to ensure that children can be brought up safely with their birth parents or within their wider extended family network if at all possible. Where this is not possible then an appropriate range of placements need to be available to meet their needs.

In order to develop and enhance the provision to reflect the changing needs of children becoming looked after, a review of residential provision for children and young people has been completed. The review involved consultation with children living in children's homes, care leavers, families, social workers, other professionals and partner agencies.

As a result of the review and changes in the age and profile of looked after children the service has developed a strategy to have outstanding children's homes. These would be small homes, situated in local communities, child centred and outcome focused, appropriately resourced and in good condition. The strategy intends to extend the quality, flexibility and range of children's homes in Leeds, including the development of homes providing specialist care, to improve the outcomes for the children placed there and to reduce the dependence on expensive external placements.

This report outlines the background to the proposals for the development of residential services for children in the City.

The report outlines plans to close and relocate the two existing 8 bed Children's Homes, Inglewood in Otley and Wood Lane in Headingley. These two Homes would be replaced by the opening of three new smaller Homes in Leeds which would be located in areas where they can better blend with the communities in which they would be located.

The basis for the strategy would be for the three new Homes to be funded by the disposal of and the use of the capital receipts from the Inglewood and Wood Lane sites.

Recommendations

This report recommends that Executive Board agree to the following proposals:

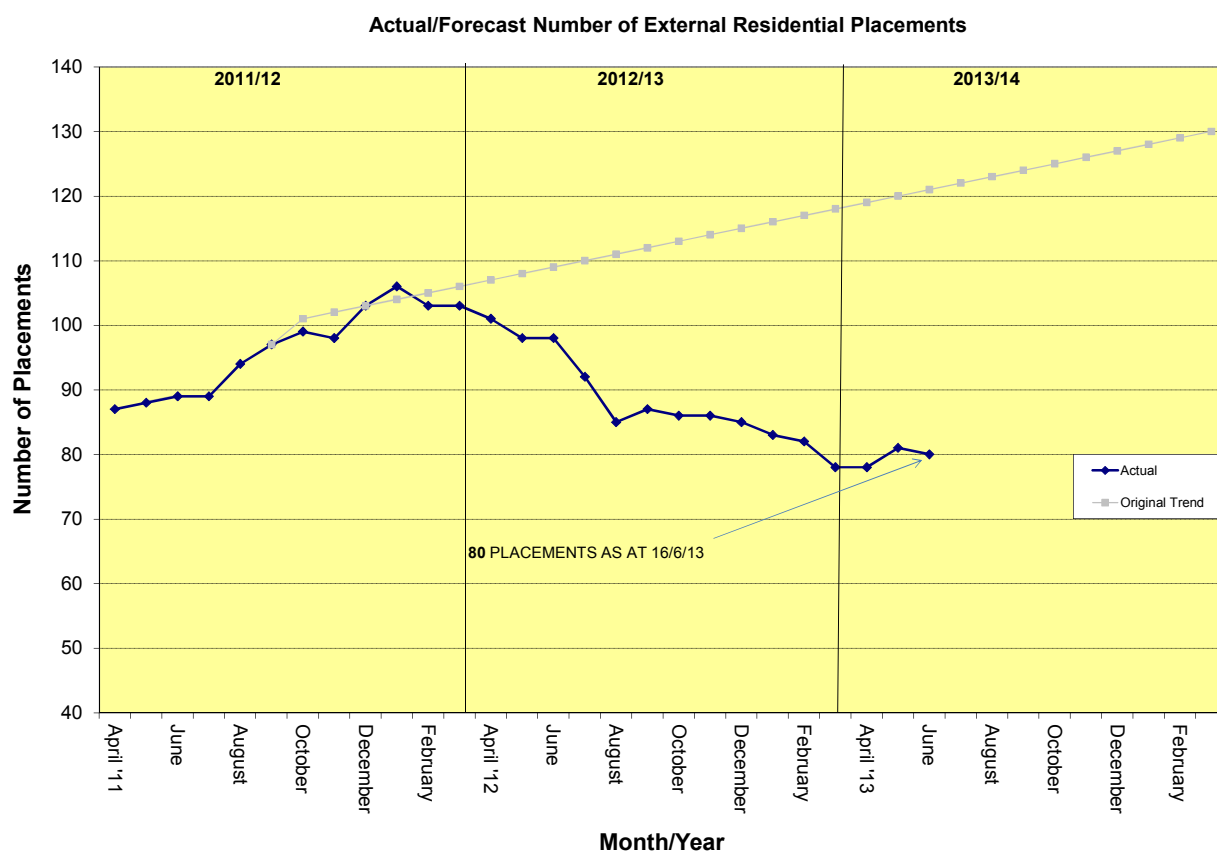
That the strategy is agreed and that approval is given for the properties at Inglewood and Wood Lane to be disposed of and approval given for the retention of the capital receipts, as necessary, on these two properties to support the development of the children's home strategy for Leeds.

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The report outlines the background to the proposals for the development of residential services in the City.
- 1.2 The report outlines the plans to close and decommission the remaining two eight bed children's homes in order to develop three new smaller children's homes to improve the quality and range of residential services in Leeds, to improve outcomes for children and to reduce the dependence on expensive external placements.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Following the 2009 Inspection there was a significant rise in the number of children requiring external residential placements from an average of 38 placements in 2009 to a peak of 107 in February 2012. Despite increased costs, opportunities for effective use of the range of multi-agency resources available to support children and young people in Leeds are lessened. Whilst some children will always benefit from highly specialist resources or require placement other than in Leeds the vast majority of our children benefit from good quality in house residential placements within Leeds.
- 2.2. Children's Services are committed to delivering on our Looked After Children Obsession and associated 'Turning the Curve' (TtC) strategy to reduce the need for children to become looked after.
- 2.3 Over the years the average cost of looked after children in Leeds has risen from circa £23k per looked after child per annum in 2007/08 to £35k per looked after child per annum in 2012/13. This is largely due to the changing mix of placements and in particular to a substantial increase in the number of children and young people who are now cared for within external placements, through Independent Fostering Agencies and external residential provision.
- 2.4 During 2012/13 the Turning the Curve strategy helped to deliver a reduction of 25 in the number of children placed in external residential placements (103 placements as at 31st March 2012 falling to 78 at the 31st March 2013) – see graph overleaf.
- 2.5 By successfully reducing our reliance on external residential placements in this way, Children's Services were able to deliver a net saving of circa £1.2m on our external placements budgets (external residential/Independent Fostering)



2.6 In 2012/13 the overall number of looked after children also fell from 1,475 as at 31st March 2012 to 1,373 as at 31st March 2013 and work done to project the likely scale of demand for placements in the medium term suggests that by 2016/17:-

- A growing proportion of the looked after children population (circa 60%) are likely to be under 10 years of age.
- A substantial increase in children placed with extended family members.
- A reduction in the number of children aged 10+ requiring residential provision (from circa 130 in March 2013 to circa 60 by March 2017) - requiring smaller bespoke residential provision to meet the more specialist and complex needs of children and young people.

2.7 As a result of the change in the age and profile of children looked after; the service anticipates that it will need to enhance the provision of locally based residential placements for looked after children in order to reduce our reliance on external residential placements.

3 Main Issues

3.1 The proposed strategy for children's homes is based upon consultation with children and young people but also in response to the need to reduce the current use of expensive

residential placements and facilitate the return of young people to Leeds. Children and young people overwhelmingly expressed the view that whilst they could not live within a family they wanted to live in a home, not an institution. Children and young people told us that they wanted to live in homes that blended in with other houses in the street; homes that were small and friendly.

- 3.2 When looking at the needs of children placed in external provision we can identify a growing cohort of children and young people with inappropriate sexualised behaviour and children at risk of child sexual exploitation. These children require smaller provision with wrap around therapeutic support due to the complexity of their needs. It is estimated that this cohort of children & young people accounts for around 40% of the overall population of external residential placements.
- 3.3 There is also a significant cohort of children and young people that, due to their complex needs and challenging behaviours, are extremely difficult to accommodate within our larger in-house residential homes. This can have a significant negative impact upon other children within these homes leading to placement instability and the need to move children that would otherwise have settled and progressed.
- 3.4 The aim is to have outstanding children's homes which are child centred and outcome focused, appropriately resourced and in good condition. These will be well managed and appropriately staffed with established training and development programmes in place.
- 3.5 The plans would not impact upon the majority of the current homes but a priority would be to close the two larger eight bedded homes, Inglewood in Otley and Wood Lane in Headingley neither of which is suitable to meet the aspirations of the strategy.
- 3.6 The first stage of the strategy would involve the closure of Inglewood, a decision which is based upon the unsuitability of the building and its location. This process has commenced but is subject to the identification of appropriate placements and requires on-going consultation and discussion with the young people, families, social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and others.
- 3.7 Once identified and a date confirmed for the closure of Inglewood, staff would move to support the transition of the young people to other homes.
- 3.8 The second stage would be the opening of three smaller children's homes once suitable buildings and locations have been agreed. Officers are currently working with young people to identify potential sites for new homes and would subsequently work with Corporate Property Services to confirm the costs of the proposed moves.
- 3.9 Following this the Wood Lane children's home would relocate to one of the identified sites. The children currently living at Wood Lane would be consulted about the proposed location as would their families, staff, social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and others.
- 3.10 Staff for the three new homes would be drawn from the existing cohort of staff employed in the residential service, including staff temporarily relocated from Inglewood and those from Wood Lane.
- 3.11 Homes would also be developed to provide more specialist care, for example, working with children who have sexualised behaviour and/or who are at risk of child sexual exploitation.

These homes would be developed with access to and support from other partner agencies and with access to therapeutic services.

- 3.12 These homes would reduce the reliance on external placements and would also provide an identified route to facilitate the return to Leeds of those young people currently in such placements when considered appropriate. The money saved on Agency placements would be used to support and develop these resources.
- 3.13 The Children's Services revenue budget includes £0.5m for the provision of one new residential home at a former site. This budget will fund the re-configuration of the residential estate. Capital receipts from the sale of Inglewood and Wood Lane will be required to fund the capital cost associated with the proposals.

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 There has been a wide ranging consultation process over the past fourteen months. Leeds Children's Rights service held meetings with the young people in all the homes. Consultation meetings were also held with all the staff teams and the homes Managers have met separately with the Service Delivery Managers.
- 4.1.2 There would need to be consultation with ward members and the local communities in which the new Homes are to be located.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The children's homes strategy is designed to develop the children's homes service and to improve the quality and range of the service. This will meet the needs of more children and reduce the need to place in expensive external placements.
- 4.2.2 An equality impact assessment has been completed and is attached to this report at appendix 1.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The children's homes strategy meets the aspiration to be a child friendly city and will improve the provision for children and young people who are looked after.
- 4.3.2 The strategy will enable a reduction in the dependence on expensive out of city placements in residential provision and will provide better quality of provision for children, improving their outcomes.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The revenue costs of the re-configuration of the residential estate will be met from the existing Children's Residential revenue budgets. Capital receipts from the sale of

Inglewood and Wood Lane will be required to fund the capital cost associated with the proposals.

- 4.4.2 The children's homes strategy will develop the range, quantity and quality of children's homes to better meet the needs of young people. It will provide smaller homes that are fit for purpose, situated in local communities and which will better meet the needs of children in Leeds.
- 4.4.3 The strategy will enable a reduction in the dependence on expensive out of city placements in residential provision and will provide better quality of provision for children improving their outcomes. It is based on developing in house resources to better reflect the aim to be a child friendly city .The strategy does not increase the number of beds currently provided but rather reshape the children's home estate to more flexibly meet the needs of children placed in homes to improve the quality of care and the outcomes achieved.
- 4.4.4 The strategy would require that there be agreement for the properties at Inglewood and Wood Lane to be disposed of and the capital receipts retained to support the re-provision of the three new homes.
- 4.4.5 Preferred locations for the three new homes are being sought within the existing Leeds property portfolio though there would need to be work to convert the properties to the required standards for the new roles. Consultation with ward members for the locations will be undertaken.
- 4.4.6 The staffing of the three new homes would initially be drawn from the existing cohort of residential staff and would create an opportunity to develop new teams with a broad and diverse range of skills and experience.
- 4.4.6 The strategy for children's homes is part of the wider Turning the Curve strategy which has the potential to deliver savings of circa £20m in direct placement costs by 2016/17.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 This report is subject to Call In

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The turning the curve strategy has the potential to deliver significant savings in direct placement costs over the next 4 years. However, it must also be recognised that the ability to deliver on this strategy may be impacted by a number of factors which are external to the control of the local authority. These include changes in legislation; demographic changes, the impact of a national child care tragedy such as the death of Peter Connolly.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The proposed children's homes strategy for Leeds will enable the development of a service for the City that will meet the needs of children and young people who need residential care and which will also reduce the use of external residential placements.

The timeline for the strategy is:

- 1 The closure and relocation of Inglewood with Wood Lane.
- 2 The opening of three Homes.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 This report recommends that Executive Board agree to the following proposals:

That the strategy is agreed and that approval is given for the properties at Inglewood and Wood Lane to be disposed of and approval given for the retention of the capital receipts, as necessary, on these two properties to support the development of the children's homes strategy for Leeds.

7. Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

