

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Parts 10 and 11 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 ensures better permanence planning for children and young people, and extends support to Looked After Children and Care Leavers by increasing the eligible age of accessing services.
- 1.2 These new statutory duties introduce a potentially significant rise in the numbers of children and families eligible for services and, the requirement of the Council to establish an additional range of resources and services to meet the changes.
- 1.3 **Recommendation**
It is recommended that the Community Services Committee note the increased requirements in Section 10 Aftercare and Section 11 Continuing Care of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the potential impact on the Council.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 introduces reform in children's services with new statutory duties, which introduce a significant rise in the numbers of children and families eligible for services.
- 2.2 Parts 10 and 11 of the Act ensures better permanence planning for children and young people, and extends support to Looked After Children and Care Leavers by increasing the eligible age of accessing services.
- 2.3 These new statutory duties introduce a potentially significant rise in the numbers of children and families eligible for services and, the requirement of the Council to establish an additional range of resources and services to meet the change in scale, range and diversity of need.
- 2.4 This report considers the changes introduced to "aftercare" and "continuing care" services within the 2014 Act and the implications for the Council

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- 3.1 Note the increased requirements in Section 10 Aftercare and Section 11 Continuing Care of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the potential impact on the Council.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Argyll and Bute Aftercare Team provide support to looked after and young people and care leavers who are 16. The service provides individual support to young people in care. Working with young people to support the transition into adulthood including financial/housing support. Predominantly the service works with 16-18 year olds however maintains contact with all care leavers. Argyll and Bute Council have a financial responsibility to support care leavers through their further education. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 introduces reform in children's services with new statutory duties, which present a significant increase to the scale, range and diversity of need;

providing services and resources for children and young people from birth up to age twenty five inclusive.

- 4.2 The new legislative requirements under section 10 and 11 of the Act, increases the age and therefore the number of young people eligible for Aftercare support and introduces a new obligation on the Council to maintain some care leavers in their looked after placement, or suitable alternative accommodation, up to their 22nd birthday.
- 4.3 The following terms for the provision of care to young people are used in this report; Aftercare is the continuing support, planning and guidance for a young person who has left care or a supported living environment. It can mean supporting young people in practical matters such as setting up home, budgeting skills, seeking employment, continuing education and can offer encouragement for developing their own social networks and interpersonal skills.
- 4.4 Throughcare is the on-going preparation and support for young people who have been looked after and may soon be making the transition to live more independently. It is not possible to put an age on when throughcare support and preparation should begin and end. This should depend on the young person and their individual needs. It can depend on a young person's own circumstances, their level of maturity and emotional development.
- 4.5 The Council's financial allocation for these requirements of the Act from Scottish Government is as yet unknown. The Scottish Government have made a public commitment to fully fund the additional and new requirements contained within the Children and Young Persons Act and the Council's settlement will be announced once negotiations conclude between the Scottish Government and COSLA.
- 4.6 Part 10 of the Act extends the age to which care leavers can receive support from their local authority. This can include (but is not restricted to) helping a young person to secure accommodation, education and employment opportunities, and financial support. Young people who have been in care will be able to ask local authorities for support until they turn 26.
- 4.7 If a young person who has been in care asks their local authority for support and assistance, the local authority has a duty to assess their needs. If that young person has eligible needs, and the needs cannot be met elsewhere, the authority must offer support.
- 4.8 Part 11 of the Act gives young people at the age of 16 years the right to choose to continue in care where they are living, up to their 21st birthday. This means young people may continue to live in residential care, residential school or foster placement.
- 4.9 The Aftercare changes (part 10) and "Continuing Care" provisions both came into effect on 1 April 2015. However, they will not apply to all care leavers. The right to "Continuing Care" will only be available to new care leavers

(those who leave care in or after April 2015) who were born after 1 April 1999 and whose last placement was 'away from home'.

- 4.10 The Scottish Government will introduce 'Continuing Care' in a staged process. In the first year (2015-16) only 16-year-old care leavers (who leave care in or after April 2015) will be eligible to a 'Continuing Care' arrangement. In each of the next four years (2016-17 to 2019-20) the Scottish Government will extend the right to 'Continuing Care' to an older year group (17,18, 19, etc.), allowing the 16 year olds who opted for 'Continuing Care' in 2015-16 to remain in their placements up until their 21st birthday.
- 4.11 At any stage until their 21st birthday, young people can choose to leave continuing care and move to Throughcare and Aftercare.
- 4.12 The likely demand for this increased provision is very challenging to predict. The raising of eligibility from 18 to 21, which includes the concept of 'continuing care' could result in a 10 to 40 percent increase in current placements. However experience shows that the majority of accommodated young people's preference is for Aftercare sooner rather than later. The number of Aftercare cases will likewise also increase and planning assumptions appear to be at around forty percent.
- 4.13 At the time of writing, July 2015, the Council currently has approximately 70 Looked After and Accommodated Children and Care Leavers who would qualify for the additional provisions within the Act. This number is of course subject to fluctuations which are very difficult to predict due to the nature of the services provided.
- 4.14 Importantly, by the year 2020 the number of children and young people eligible for services will be approximately 300 Looked After and Accommodated Children, and Care Leavers from a current approximate 190.
- 4.15 Argyll and Bute's three children houses, supported lodgings provide and foster care service do not have the capacity to cope with a large number of young adult eligible for a service. It also not appropriate for 20 year old to be in a children's house with a 12 year old. A new model is being developed with flats and houses located close to children's houses this is known as a "core and cluster model"
- 4.16 An 'alternative to care project' supported by 'core and cluster accommodation' is being considered at this time. Additional staffing and support will be available across Oban, Helensburgh and Dunoon. This program has the potential capacity to meet the increase in needs. This project will depend on Scottish Government delivering recurring revenue funding.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The new provisions in the Act are intended to provide care leavers with a more graduated transition out of care. This will help to normalise the experience by

allowing strong and positive relationships between young people and their careers to be maintained into adulthood.

- 5.2 The Act however, presents issues about the age range of children and young people in children's units and capacity in both residential and foster care. The Children and Families service are currently developing a set of proposals which would both provide extra capacity and facilities where young people could learn independence skills in consultation with our young people.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – Proposals being developed in line with the provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act
- 6.2 Financial – Awaiting settlement from the Scottish Government. The level of additional resource is not known at this time
- 6.3 Legal – The Council has key legal responsibilities for looked after children and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 will add to these.
- 6.4 HR – Implementing these sections of the Act will inevitably involve additional staffing requirements
- 6.5 Equalities – Compliance with the Act helps ensure our looked after children and young people have increased support.
- 6.6 Risk – Failure to receive an appropriate financial settlement which will ensure the increased provisions can be delivered could lead to cost pressure for the service and reputational risk for the Council.
- 6.7 Customer Service - none

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