Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10:00am, Tuesday 25 September 2018

Looked After Children – Transformation Programme Progress Report – referral from the Education, Children and Families Committee

Item number	7.5
Report number	
Wards	All

Executive summary

The Education, Children and Families Committee on 14 August 2018 considered the attached report by the Executive Director for Communities and Families providing an update on the progress of the Looked After Children transformation programme.

The report has been referred to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee for consideration.

Terms of Referral

Looked After Children – Transformation Programme Progress Report – referral from the Education, Children and Families Committee

Terms of referral

1.1   On 14 August 2018, the Education, Children and Families Committee considered a report by the Executive Director for Communities and Families providing an update on the progress of the Looked After Children transformation programme.

1.2   Through use of the Early Years Change Fund and initiatives agreed through the Priority Based Planning process the service developed a transformation programme to shift the balance of care towards more preventative services that reduced the need for children to come into care.

1.3   A number of targets had been set covering the period April 2013 to March 2018. Some revisions were made to these targets in April 2017 to reflect the changes in actual performance against national trends.

1.4   The Education, Children and Families Committee agreed:

    1.4.1   To note the progress made to date against the starting position at March 2013 as set out in appendix 1 of the report.

    1.4.2   To note the actions in progress to deliver further improvements during 2018/19.

    1.4.3   To refer the report to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee.

For Decision/Action

2.1   The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee is asked to consider the attached report

Notes

3.1   In Appendix 1 of the original report – Looked After Children – Populations 2013 v 2018 – there was a missing figure in the notes field under "Residential Care". This should now read: "There are 42 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASCs) in the 2018 population."

3.2 The City of Edinburgh has also made significant progress in the implementation of continuing care; 210 of the 335 young people who were eligible have been supported to remain in foster, kinship or residential placements.

Background reading / external references

Webcast of Education, Children and Families Committee – 14 August 2018

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Links

Appendix 1	Looked After Children – Transformation Programme Progress Report - report by the Executive Director for Communities and Families

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 14 August 2018

Looked After Children: Transformation Programme Progress Report

Item number	
Report number	
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Executive Summary

Expenditure on Looked After Children (LAC) increased by an average of £1.8m a year from 2007 to 2013 as a result of increases in the number of LAC and increased use of purchased foster carers. Through use of the Early Years Change Fund and initiatives agreed through the Priority Based Planning process the service developed a transformation programme to shift the balance of care towards more preventative services that reduce the need for children to come into care.

A number of targets were set covering the period April 2013 – March 2018. Some revisions were made to these targets in April 2017 to reflect the changes in actual performance against national trends. This report provides an update on progress to the end of March 2018. The original targets were reported to Corporate Management Team dated 31 July 2013 and subsequently reported to Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee on 25 September 2013.

The LAC transformation programme was a 5-year programme which commenced in April 2013 and had targets for performance up to March 2018.

Progress was last reported to the Education, Children and Families Committee in December 2017. At March 2018 many of the targets have been achieved or exceeded. These included an overall reduction in the LAC population; a reduction in the number of children in foster care; an increase in overall kinship care placements; and a reduction in the use of secure care.

The service was behind target to reduce the percentage of independent foster placements and reduce use of residential care placements although significant progress had been made since 2013. Analysis of national benchmarking information indicates that Edinburgh has closed the gap in relation to use of independent foster placements and although has fallen short of its own target for the use of residential care has a significantly lower use than the national position.

As a result, the service is in the process of developing a new strategy and targets to continue to reduce the need for children to become Looked After taking into account factors such as the rising child population, the implications of implementing Self Directed Support and the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the increases in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Report

Looked After Children: Transformation Programme Progress Report

1.   Recommendations

1.1   The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:

   1.1.1   Note the progress made to date against the starting position at March 2013 as set out in appendix 1.

   1.1.2   Note the actions in progress to deliver further improvements during 2018/19.

   1.1.3   Refer this report to Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

2.   Background

2.1   The number of LAC increased from 1,228 in 2007 to 1,410 in 2013, an increase of 15% or an average of 30 children a year. The cost of this increase is £1.8m each year, a total increase of £10.8m since 2007. The Council had been budgeting for continued annual increases of £1.8m a year from 2013/14 to 2017/18.

2.2   The growth in LAC was primarily accommodated within fostering with an increase in placements from 386 in 2007 to 601 in 2013, an increase of 56%.

2.3   The majority of this growth was with independent fostering providers with the average cost per placement being £46,000 pa.

2.4   This trend of increasing numbers of LAC and corresponding increase in purchased fostering was reflected at a national level.

2.5   The Scottish Government, in seeing this trend across Scotland, set up the Early Years Change Fund encouraging Local Authorities to implement preventative initiatives designed to reduce the continued growth in LAC and shift investment from expensive intervention measures to early support for families that reduce the need for accommodation and improve outcomes for children and young people.

2.6   In February 2012 the Council approved funding of £8.642m from 2012/13 to 2014/15 for the Early Years Change Fund. The Council's Long-Term Financial Plan built in the continuation of £4.038m per year from 2015/16.

2.7   Through the Priority Based Planning process the service developed a transformation programme to change the balance of care for LAC to take effect from April 2013 and targets were set to March 2018. This includes strengthening universal early years services and providing more support to families to support

their children at home. Targets for independent foster care and residential care were revised in April 2017, following updated comparisons with national trends, and this was reflected in the 2017/18 budget.

2.8   LAC can be placed in the following placement types. The direct cost of each placement type is also shown which gives a context to the variance in rates. The transformation programme aims to shift the balance of care towards the lower cost placement types:

Placement type / Client populations	Direct unit cost pa
Looked After at Home	Minimal. Mainly supported through staffing and some preventative services
Kinship care	£7K
Prospective adoption	£7K
In-house foster care	£26K
Purchased foster care	£46K
Young people's centres and close support	£120K - £170K
Residential schools	£100K - £330K
Secure care	£290K

3.   Main report

Balance of Care performance to date

3.1   Appendix 1 sets out the client populations, the number at March 2013 and the target and actual number at March 2018. Further information about each target will provide an understanding of the actions to date, any issues that have arisen and any actions being taken to address ongoing pressures.

Looked After Children (all placements)

3.2   The target is to reduce the rate of annual growth by a third from an average of 30 placements to 20 a year. The performance is significantly ahead of target as not only has the increase been addressed but overall numbers have reduced by 76

since March 2013. The reduction in overall LAC numbers is broadly consistent with the national performance over the same period.

3.3   Services designed to stop children needing to become LAC and enabling children to cease being LAC, such as universal Early Years services, parenting support programmes, Prepare, Family Group Decision Making and the Integrated Family and Household Support service, will continue to focus on supporting children and families to enable them to not require statutory measures.

Foster Care

Overall placement numbers

3.4   Foster placements had increased at an average of 40 a year from March 2007 to March 2013. The initial target was for there to be no further growth in this population and this was revised in April 2017 to be a reduction of 28 placements compared to the March 2013 position. The service has achieved the revised target and is confident this can be maintained.

3.5   It should be noted that foster care was at times provided to former LAC i.e. children who were in a foster placement but are no longer legally classed as Looked After when they reach age 18, on a discretionary basis. Through Continuing Care legislation, which came into force in April 2015, the Council has a duty to support these placements where the young person requests it and it is deemed to be in their best interests. The Scottish Government has provided some additional funding to meet the expected increase in costs as a result of the new legislation.

The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) Foster Care

3.6   The target is to increase the proportion of foster placements provided by the Council's own carers from 55% at March 2013 to 67% by March 2018 and the current position is 63%. However, since March 2013 the number placed with CEC carers has increased by 7% or 24 placements.

3.7   Significant progress has been made to increase in-house capacity through carers transferring from independent agencies and providing housing adaptations for existing carers to increase the number of placements they can support. The service constantly pursues these actions to improve in-house capacity.

3.8   Over the 5 years of the LAC Transformation Programme the national position has changed which has seen a reduction in the percentage of local authority provided foster placements from 75% to 67%. Over the same period Edinburgh's position has improved from 55% to 63%, the gap to the national position reducing from 20% to 4%. Should this trend continue Edinburgh's performance will be in line with the national position in the coming year.

Independent Foster Care

3.9   The target is to reduce the percentage of independent foster placements from 44% at March 2013 to 33% by March 2018. At March 2018, 37% are with independent agencies.

3.10   Progress has been made in this area with the overall number placed with independent agencies reducing by 20% or 51 placements since March 2013.

3.11   The service continues to meet with all independent agencies to review pricing, particularly in relation to permanent placements and placements for young people aged 18 and over. The service will continue to challenge pricing where appropriate in order to ensure all charges are justified for each placement.

Residential Care and Secure Care

3.12   The target was to reduce the use of residential placements and the service made good progress from 2013 to early 2017.

3.13   The service has been successful in reducing internal capacity through the closure of Wellington School in 2014, Pentland View in February 2015 and Greendykes Young People's Centre (YPC) in August 2016.   The opening of the new Heathervale unit in 2016 and the replacement of Oxgangs YPC in 2018, with a design similar to Heathervale, will provide more flexible accommodation for young people and enable the service to manage some of the young people with exceptional needs.

3.14   Use of independent residential schools remained broadly the same from 2013 to early 2017. However, the position changed significantly following the influx of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. The Council usually had 2-3 prior to 2016 but the number rapidly increased and there are now approximately 40 aged under 18 with an ever increasing 18+ population eligible for throughcare and aftercare support. At March 2018 there were 17 UASC's in the council's own residential provision. The impact of this has been that some children from Edinburgh have had to be placed in independent residential schools as there was no internal capacity. This position has eased in recent months as UASC's aged 16+ are entering supported living arrangements and internal capacity is being released.

3.15   In addition, the service has made the decision to place some children in independent residential schools as an alternative to secure care. The result of this has been a reduction in the use of secure care with average usage in 2017/18 being 8 beds compared to the average in 2012/13 of 12 beds. Current usage is 4 beds and we are generating income from the sale of beds to other local authorities.

3.16   The service has carried out an analysis of the use of residential care (including secure care) across Scotland. In 2015/16 the proportion of LAC in residential care was 9.9% nationally compared to 6.3% in Edinburgh. This indicates that the Council's aim of supporting more children in family based settings and reducing the

use of residential and secure care has been successful when compared to the national position.

3.17 The service continues to review all internal and purchased residential placements to minimise their use. Independent reviewing officers chair reviews of LAC placements. In the highest spend cases we have put in place a number of practice evaluation sessions which involve senior management scrutiny of ongoing placements and a new exploration of the alternatives. This is leading to some proposed alternative plans for children but in most cases these will need the agreement of a Children's Hearing as the child's place of residence is named in the conditions attached to a statutory supervision order.

3.18 In addition, all placements are undergoing a re-assessment involving relevant social work and education staff to identify opportunities for returning the children to Council provision. This will include utilising the principles of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 where possible, which seeks to engage parents, carers and extended family in developing a support plan that meets their needs and enables the child to be cared for by them, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Kinship Care

3.19 Increasing the use of kinship care was seen as a way of reducing the increasing use of foster care and adoptions. This practice has been supported by new legislation introducing the Kinship Care Order that encourages family members to care for children without the need for social work involvement. The kinship population is now split between formal kinship carers of LAC and kinship carers of former LAC and those that have never been LAC. In March 2013 the combined number being financially supported by the Council was 467 and this has increased by 20% to 559 at March 2018.

3.20 Over the past few years kinship support services have been put in place, directly supporting approximately 100 placements a year. The Family Group Decision Making Service has also been expanded to provide a service for vulnerable babies across the city and reviewing existing residential placements. Taken together, the expansion of this support to families is seen to be the main reasons for the increases in kinship placements.

3.21 The vulnerable babies project roll out to other areas of the city has had a positive effect on the number of babies needing to become LAC and subsequently being placed for adoption.

Prospective adoptions

3.22 The original target was to increase the number of prospective adoptions over the 5-year period of the transformation programme. However, the success of services such as Family Group Decision Making and Prepare are enabling more babies to

remain with their parents or with kinship carers. There are now approximately 25 prospective adoptions in place at any one time.

Looked After Children at Home

3.23   The Looked After Children supported at home with their parents has reduced over the period of the transformation programme, from 27% to 25% of the LAC population, and is due to a significant increase in the number ceasing to be Looked After at all. This is seen as a positive movement when seen against the continuing success of kinship care increases and reductions in foster care.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children who are looked after and accommodated in Edinburgh was reported to the Education, Children and Families committee in December 2017. At that point we were supporting 42 UASCs, 32 of whom had arrived in 2016 and 2017 and 19 of whom were residing in young people's centres. The current total is still 42, of which 12 are resident in young people's centres. 15 UASCs have moved into shared supported living arrangements in 2018. These arrangements to date have been successful and more cost effective.

Future strategy

3.24   The service will continue to promote early intervention and prevention practices and seek to re-align resources from high-cost residential, secure and foster placements where possible. Plans include putting in place a council wide workforce development programme on restorative practice; increased provision of Family Group Decision Making, recruitment of host families for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, accelerating the implementation of Self Directed Support for children in need, working with the NHS and schools to improve the identification of and support for children with mental health concerns and enhancing support for foster carers who are caring for children with disabilities.

3.25   The child population of Edinburgh is predicted to rise by approximately 5% between 2016 and 2020, compared to the Scottish figure of 1%, and 11% by 2024.

3.26   While the implications of this on the LAC population are unknown it is anticipated that the measures being taken, as set out in 3.25 above, will ensure only those at most risk require statutory measures.

4.   Measures of success

4.1   Appendix 1 shows the LAC population at March 2013 and March 2018. It can be seen that the overall LAC population has reduced along with all client populations with the exception of residential care. This is primarily due to the significant

increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children which account for 17 of the March 2018 population.

5. Financial impact

5.1 There are no financial implications related to this report. The financial implications of changes in the LAC population and investment in early intervention and prevention are factored into the annual budget setting process.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

6.1 Due to the nature of the client group being supported and the high cost per placement for residential, secure and foster care there will always be a risk that additional pressures may arise. The service is confident, however, that the services and processes in place can minimise the risks of significant additional pressures arising

7. Equalities impact

7.1 It is anticipated that the overall programme will have a positive impact on outcomes for vulnerable children due to the focus on preventative, neighbourhood and family focused initiatives. A record of Equality and Rights Impact Assessment will be published in accordance with agreed Council processes.

8. Sustainability impact

8.1 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report. A Sustainability and Environmental Impact Assessment will be published in accordance with agreed Council processes.

9. Consultation and engagement

9.1 Where the transformation initiatives require consultation with the trade unions, public or Scottish Government it will be carried out as necessary.

10. Background reading/external references

10.1 Looked After Children: Transformational Programme Progress Report – Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee 23 September 2015

10.2 Early Years Change Fund Progress Update on Year Three – Education, Children and Families Committee 6 October 2015

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11.   Appendices

11.1   Looked After Children – Populations 2013 v 2018

Appendix 1

Looked After Children – Populations 2013 v 2018

Client populations	Actual at March 2013	Actual at March 2018	Variance to March 2013	Movement %	Notes
Looked After Children (covering all sub-sets below)	**1,410**	**1,334**	**-76**	**-5**	
Foster Care (CEC and independent)	608	581	-27	-4	
CEC foster Care	343	367	24	7	
Independent foster care	265	214	-51	-19	
Residential care	84	111	27	32	Overall use has increased by 32%. There are X UASC's in the 2018 population.
Kinship care	288	271	-17	-6	This only reflects the formal kinship placements. Taken together with kinship placements for former LAC and those that have never been LAC the total has increased by 20% since March 2013.

Prospective adoptions	39	26	-13	-33	This has reduced consistently at the same time as kinship placements have increased.
Secure care	12	7	-5	-42	
Looked After Children at Home	379	338	-41	-11	