

# The City of Edinburgh Council

10am, Thursday, 22 June 2023

## Children's Houses

Item number  
Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Council are asked to note details of our Children's Houses that provide care to young people within Edinburgh and to arrange Members' visits to them within this calendar year, 2023, following the approved motion by Councillor Key on Heathervale Care Home Service on 4 May 2023.

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## Children's Houses

### 2. Executive Summary

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2.1 This report sets out details of our Children's Houses that provide care to our young people within Edinburgh following the motion approved at full Council on 4 May 2023 by Councillor Key on Heathervale Care Home Service:

"Council:

- 1) Notes the most recent inspection report by the Care Inspectorate of Heathervale Care Home Service.
- 2) Is very concerned with the quality grading of "Adequate"; this equates to an evaluation assessment of 3 on a scale of 1 to 6 and means that "strengths only just outweigh weaknesses".
- 3) Is further concerned that this Service is not showing signs of improvement and is not achieving the high-quality grades that were evident 5 years ago.
- 4) Calls for a report to Council in one cycle that details the improvement plan called for by the Care Inspectorate and that assures council that all actions called for in the report have been completed satisfactorily.
- 5) Is very disappointed that Councillors, in their role as Corporate Parents, only became aware of the details of this report through press media coverage rather than through a Member's Brief or other appropriate channel.
- 6) Calls for a comprehensive report within 2 cycles on all accommodation services that provide care to our young people within Edinburgh and to arrange Members' visits to them within this calendar year, 2023.

2.2 It is acknowledged and regrettable that Councillors were not informed timeously of the Heathervale Inspection Report. The Care Inspectorate inspect all registered services which include our Children's Houses, previously known as care homes/children's homes. All reports are published on their website and going forward when an inspection has been undertaken in one of our Children's Houses, a summary report will be provided to the Education, Children and Families Committee.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The Council has eight Children's Houses across the city that provide care and accommodation to young people. There are also further provisions within the service which provide accommodation and Through Care and Aftercare support. We are not listing the location of the eight because they are children's houses and therefore, we will not put their addresses in a public report.
- 3.2 Members of the Education, Children and Families Committee visited Braid House (part of the Howdenhall complex) in March 2023.
- 3.3 When arranging any future visits, it is important that we are mindful of the young people's privacy as these are their homes, therefore visits need to be planned to suit the needs of the young people and their activities.
- 3.4 For member visits it is not appropriate for large numbers of people to visit children's houses together and nor should members approach houses individually to visit because we need to respect that these houses are where our children live, and they have a right to privacy and to a family life. A suggestion we have is that members can be linked to the nearest house to their ward and therefore we can develop local links. We would wish to work with young people to ensure that they are happy with this.

### 4. Main report

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- 4.1 There are eight Children's Houses located across the city which provide accommodation to young people who are looked after by the Council in our role as corporate parents. There are also through care and aftercare accommodation within our ESS estate, which includes self-contained flats for some of our over sixteens.
- 4.2 Each of the eight houses are different in terms of size and age of the property. Some older properties can provide accommodation for seven or eight young people, although most are for six. The Care Inspectorate recommends in their [Design Guide](#) that premises should resemble a family home and young people have indicated that they prefer a maximum of four beds. This also aligns to the values of The Promise and the service are looking at whether this is achievable within the current structure. One factor that impacts Children's Houses significantly is emergency receptions into care, where children are placed on an emergency basis into a Children's House which has availability. This is not helpful to the children living in the house and does not always meet the needs of the children placed in an emergency. We have identified this as an area we require to address, and are reconfiguring our secure service, Braid House, to become a multi-functional reception centre. This will allow children to be admitted in an emergency and where key services will support children and their families to be returned home with a package of ongoing support or to an alternative suitable placement with appropriate transitioning if this is required.

- 4.3 Staff within the Children’s Houses provide ongoing support to all the young people living there, using a trauma informed practice approach which focuses on developing the skills for young people to move on to either living back with family or independently when the time is right. They will also support the young people when they have moved on, with the level of support being individually assessed for each young person. Houses also engage young people in activities which look to build on their self-esteem and support a pro social approach with the young people. Holidays, outings, and short breaks are arranged, and staff accompany the young people on these trips. Staff also focus on support for young people to access education, whether this is in school, college or an alternative curriculum in partnership with schools, colleges, and Skills Development Scotland
- 4.4 In addition to providing group living, we also provide step-down/supported living accommodation, where young people have their own accommodation with staff support onsite. Through Care After Care services work with care leavers aged 16-25 inclusive to transition into early adulthood, providing support and assistance including help with applying for accommodation, education/training and employment, finance, and relationships.
- 4.5 Young people in our Children’s Houses are also supported by [whocares?Scotland](#) who have been prioritising one-to-one advocacy for young people and provide reports on their involvement and activities. They visit both ESS and our residential houses regularly to meet with young people and have commented on the positive change in culture they have observed. They have stated that our young people are being listened to and taken seriously and their advocacy workers are warmly welcomed into each establishment.
- 4.5.1 *A quote from a Who Cares? March 2023 Report noted “we continue to receive a large proportion of referrals through residential staff in the houses. Regular attendance at residents meetings and general visits have meant that strong links have been built between the residential houses and our APW who works closely with them. Promise implementation meetings have also been co-facilitated with residential staff so as to promote advocacy and the views of the young people”*
- 4.5 There is ongoing work across the estate to improve the physical environment, including outdoor space and garden areas and our young people are involved in decisions around decoration within communal areas and their bedrooms.
- 4.6 To minimise the disruption to young people’s privacy, whilst accommodating members visiting, it is proposed that councillors visit premises within or close to their wards, as noted previously, our Children’s Houses are situated across the city.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 A proposed timetable of visits will be created and shared with members. It should be noted that these are subject to change as the priority is the young people and their plans.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 Any financial impact is contained within existing budgets.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 Our staff speak to the young people about any planned upgrades or changes to their houses and how they would like to be involved in design decisions. The Care Inspectorate engage with young people during inspections and visits and also send questionnaires.
- 7.2 House meetings are held regularly, and they include discussions about activities, planned trips and holidays, young people would like to suggest/ take part in and also issues within the building they want to bring to the attention of staff. Some houses involve the young people in minor decoration projects if they want to contribute and take part. Our young people are also encouraged to comment on proposed colour schemes and changes to soft furnishings in the common areas within the houses.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 All Care Inspectorate Reports are published on their website and can be viewed here: <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/inspection-reports>

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 n/a