

**REPORT TO:** Education & Children's Services PPRP

**MEETING DATE:** 12 December 2006

**BY:** Director of Education and Children's Services

**SUBJECT:** Outcomes in Residential Childcare

---

## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To provide PPRP with information about outcomes in relation to residential childcare in East Lothian and how this compares with the rest of Scotland and with other Local Authorities.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That PPRP notes the very positive outcomes associated with residential childcare in East Lothian.
- 2.2 That PPRP notes the excellent work undertaken by residential and allied staff.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 21 March 2006 PPRP requested more information about outcomes in relation to residential childcare in East Lothian. The detail of the information sought was not specified.
- 3.2 East Lothian Council has two residential units for children. Pathway is located in the grounds of the former St Joseph's school, and accommodates up to seven children and young people. This unit operates in a leased building, and negotiations are underway for the purchase of this. Lothian Villa is located in Musselburgh, and accommodates six young people. Lothian Villa has a satellite flat, also in Musselburgh, and a further two young people can be accommodated there.
- 3.3 Residential Childcare is part of a range of resources for children who require care and support. Most children and young people who require to be accommodated away from their families in East Lothian are placed with foster carers. East Lothian is fortunate in having a large and skilled

pool of foster carers, and this reduces the need for residential care. Generally speaking the outcomes for children in foster care are more favourable than those in residential care, and practice in East Lothian is to seek foster care placements wherever possible in respect of children who cannot live with their own families. However, some young people present extremely challenging behaviour and come from very traumatic backgrounds and cannot be sustained in foster care. For these young people, professional residential care is required. Such young people can be violent, may have school attendance issues, may have been physically or sexually abused, may have a tendency to abuse others, and may have anti social tendencies including offending behaviour. Such children and young people require skilled and consistent care.

The number of young people being cared for in residential care settings has fallen over the last thirty years. In 1976 there were 6242 children in residential care in Scotland and by 2006 that number had fallen to 1638, a drop of 74%. This trend has now bottomed out and it is unlikely that the numbers in residential care will continue to fall significantly.

East Lothian has the smallest rate per thousand children in residential care of a group of twelve benchmarked authorities. East Lothian has the fifth smallest rate per thousand of all the Scottish Authorities. With a smaller population, Midlothian has more than three times the East Lothian figure. The small numbers of children in residential care in East Lothian are a tribute to the hardwork of staff working in Children's Services and other related disciplines.

Residential care in the UK as a whole receives a poor press. Care leavers have unacceptably high incidents of imprisonment, homelessness and poor educational outcomes. Abuse in residential care is not uncommon, and young people typically leave care settings at too young an age and ill equipped to deal with the pressures of life.

Whilst the numbers of young people in residential care in East Lothian are small, their outcomes are relatively positive. For example, in 2005/6 four East Lothian children of school leaving age left residential care, and all achieved at least SCQF level 3 in English and maths. The latest figures show that educational attainment for looked after children in East Lothian is higher than any other mainland Authority, though it is much lower than for children who are not looked after.

The real impact of residential care on children can only be properly gauged when young people become adults. This information is not routinely collected, but we have anecdotal information that young people leaving our care homes do relatively well. Many young people retain links with their former care home and we hear of young people going on to university and leading responsible, productive lives. This is not universally the case. Other young people continue to have serious problems into their adult lives.

Residential care settings are often criticised for the poor outcomes achieved, but it should be noted that most admissions to residential care

involve young people who are aged around fourteen, when serious issues have already developed and are difficult to turn around.

Anecdotally it is the case that most young people admitted to our residential units are either not attending school or are excluded from school. Almost without exception such young people are reintegrated into appropriate educational provision. Other young people display challenging behaviour at the point of admission, including offending behaviour. Again, the track record of our residential units in relation to turning around such behaviours is very good.

Profiles of actual case examples involving young people in residential care in East Lothian will be tabled at the meeting.

The cost of residential childcare is high. Within East Lothian the cost is over £2000 per week per young person. However, this compares with a charge of over £4000 per week for a place in secure accommodation. A number of young people in our units have been placed there following a period in secure accommodation, or as an alternative to this.

In addition to those young people placed within residential care within East Lothian, a number of young people are placed in external resources. These include residential schools and secure accommodation. Such placements are often made at the instigation of Children's Hearings. The costs of such placements are variable – a residential school placement costs between £2200 and £ 3000 per week.

Outcomes in relation to residential school placements are mixed. Young people can become detached from their families and communities, and this can make it difficult when the time comes for them to return home. Residential schools are by nature institutionalised, and some young people find it difficult to make adjustments at the end of their placements. A consultation exercise with young people showed that those placed in external resources felt most isolated and afraid.

The residential care units in East Lothian provide added value to Children's Services by undertaking additional tasks such as outreach and aftercare support to young people. At present there is an income requirement of £147,500 per annum. It was not possible to identify full funding for the residential service at the point of disaggregation from the former Lothian Region, and this anomaly has not been addressed since then. This means the sale of between one and two residential places per year to other councils. It would be possible to expand the work of the residential units for the benefit of East Lothian children if the income requirement were addressed.

East Lothian Council has invested in human resources in relation to residential childcare. As a consequence there is an almost wholly qualified workforce. Ninety-five percent of staff have qualifications in accordance with those laid down by the Scottish Social Services Council, and this is thought to be higher than any other Local Authority in Scotland. Terms and Conditions compare favourably with other Local

Authorities and this has helped us to retain and recruit a skilled workforce, which is essential to high quality services. This in turn results in the Units being competent to deal with very troubled young people and avoiding other more expensive options.

Residential Care Services are inspected by the Care Commission and a separate report to PPRP is available in relation to the latest inspections. In addition, children's rights workers from Who Cares? and Children 1<sup>st</sup> visit both our residential units and advocate on behalf of individual young people placed there and in external resources. Both staff are very positive about the quality of care in our units.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

#### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Financial – None

5.2 Personnel - None

5.3 Other - None

#### **6 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 Profiles of young people in residential care will be tabled at the meeting.

<b>AUTHOR'S NAME</b>	Robert Swift
<b>DESIGNATION</b>	Service Manager (Children & Families) Resources
<b>CONTACT INFO</b>	01620 827237
<b>DATE</b>	27 November 2006