

# **BRIEFING PAPER**

**Executive Committee, 1 Dec 2015**

## **CARE AND EDUCATION PLACEMENT PROVISION: DATA, PERFORMANCE INFORMATION AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** This briefing paper presents data and performance information in relation to looked after and accommodated children and young people, care and education placement provision, the reasons behind the figures and the actions being taken within the service to improve outcomes, using resources as effectively as possible.
- 1.2** Children and young people may require accommodation for a number of reasons. The accommodation may be on a statutory basis or a voluntary arrangement, and range in length of time from periodic short breaks to permanence planning.
- 1.3** Children may also require educational provision out with that provided through mainstream schools. This ranges from time limited support in school provided by internal staff resources such as Learning Support Teachers or Educational Psychologists, to full time provision in specialist establishments. Some children require both.
- 1.4** A combination of rising demand, scarcity of providers and decreasing resources means containing these services within their allocated budgets is a significant challenge and therefore requires changes to our approaches to delivering services.

### **2 WHY CHILDREN REQUIRE ACCOMMODATION**

- 2.1** Children and young people may require accommodation, either on a statutory basis or by voluntary arrangement, for the following reasons:
- a) Becoming Looked After by the Local Authority, with a Compulsory Supervision Order specifying the child must be accommodated out with the current family arrangement. Supervision Orders may specify a particular type of accommodation or even a particular provider (although this is unusual);
  - b) A family entering into a voluntary agreement to have a child accommodated by the Local Authority (Section 25 Children Scotland Act);
  - c) A Kinship Care arrangement where a child is cared for by a member of the extended family or circle of friends. This can be on a statutory or voluntary basis;

- d) A child or young person with severe and/or complex health needs, who requires specialist accommodation to meet those needs;
- e) A child or young person with severe Social, Emotional or Behavioural Needs (SEBN) who requires specialist accommodation and education to meet those needs;
- f) A child or young person with a range of additional needs who receives periodic short term respite care to support the family in their caring duties.

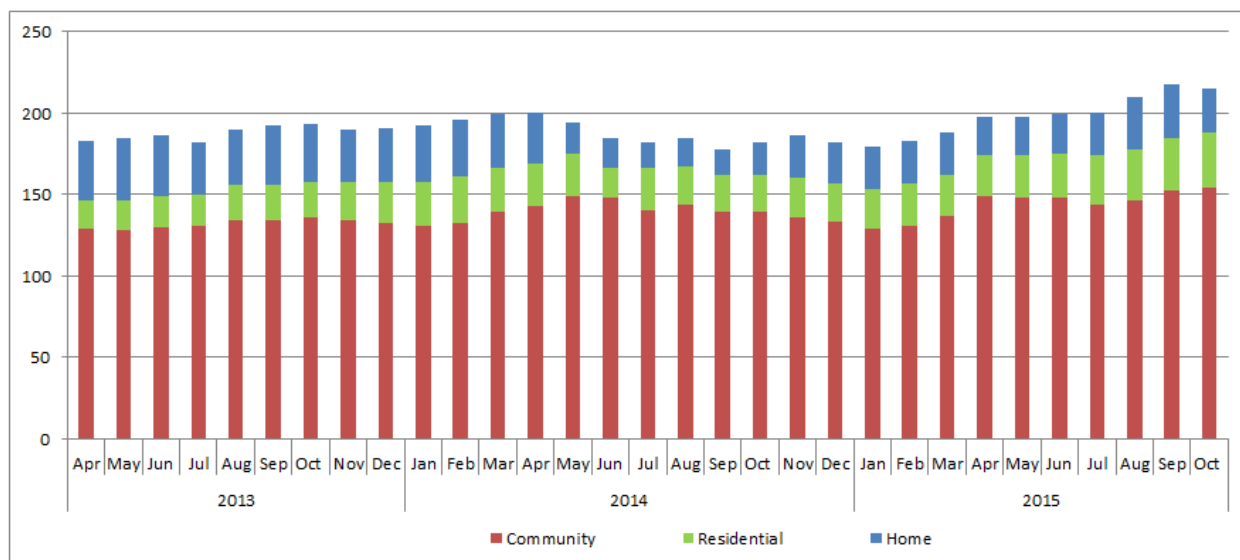
**2.2** The most common types of accommodation are:

- a) Scottish Borders Council (SBC) foster carers – foster carers recruited, assessed, supported, paid and managed by SBC;
- b) Supported Carers, who are carers specifically trained to support young people who are transitioning to independent adult living;
- c) SBC residential provision – SBC provides residential accommodation to 5 young people in Wheatlands Young People’s Unit in Galashiels;
- d) Externally purchased foster carers – foster care placements purchased from external providers where there are insufficient SBC foster placements available or where a level of specialist knowledge or experience is required. In the Scottish Borders, this includes a specialist adolescent fostering service commissioned from Action for Children;
- e) Complex Needs residential – specialist accommodation provided by an external organisation designed to meet specific complex and severe needs. Providers of this type may provide residential accommodation only, or a combination of residential accommodation and educational provision;
- f) SEBN residential – specialist accommodation provided by an external organisation designed to meet specific needs relating to social, emotional and behavioural issues;
- g) Secure care – very high level specialist supported care for children and young people with severe emotional or behavioural needs, who pose a danger to themselves or others.

**2.3** The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 made the welfare and provision of services to looked after children a duty for a number of key organisations, include Local Authorities, Health Boards, Police Scotland and other key corporate bodies, and is known as Corporate Parenting. Corporate Parenting is *“the formal and local partnerships needed between all Local Authority departments and services, and associated agencies, who are responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children and young people.”* (Scottish Executive, January 2007).

### 3 LOOKED AFTER POPULATION IN SCOTTISH BORDERS & PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

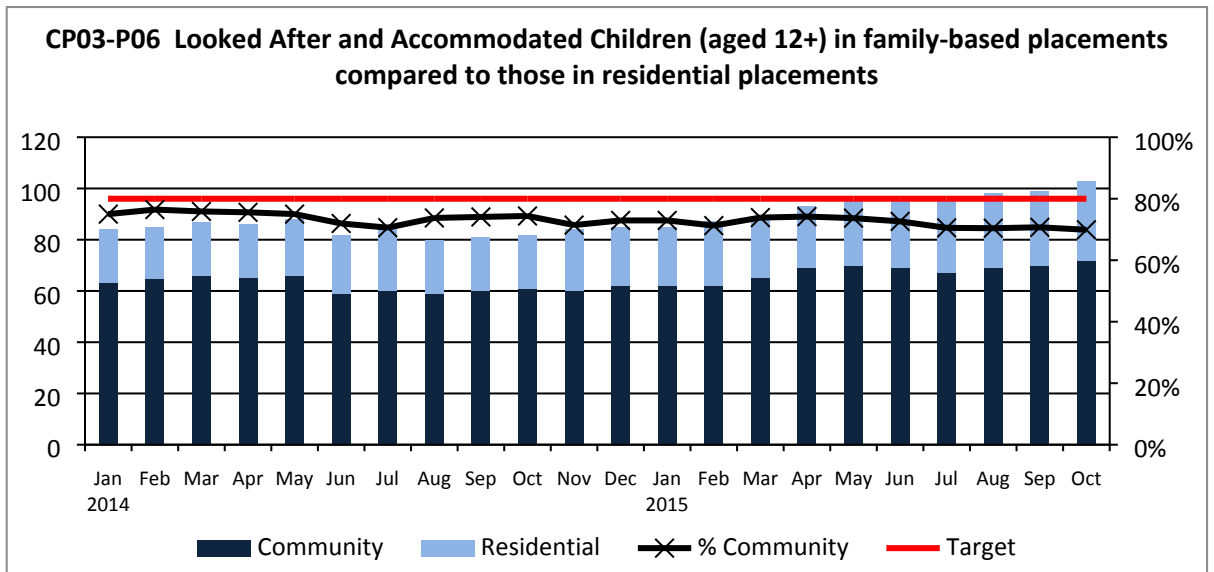
**3.1** The following table provides an overview of the Looked after population in Scottish Borders over the last 2 ½ years:



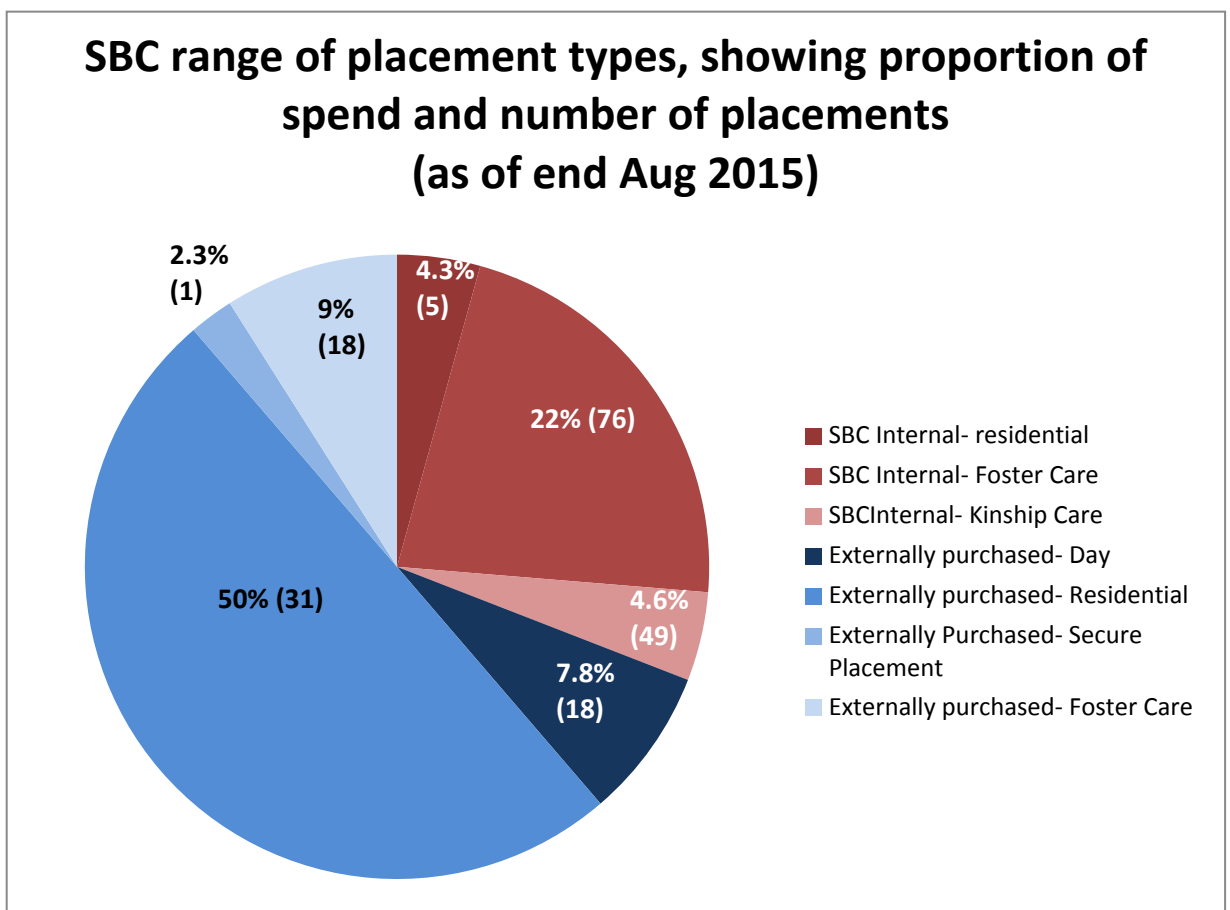
- On 1st November 2015, **214** children and young people were looked after by Scottish Borders Council;
- Additional 46 children are 'looked after' due to planned short term placements (e.g. short breaks for disabled children).

**3.2** Rising numbers are in line with the national trend. Within the overall rise however, the proportion looked after *at home* is dropping, nationally and in Borders, which may indicate an overall rise in the severity of cases being brought forward which require statutory intervention.

**3.3** The **balance of placement type (age 12+)** is presented to members on a quarterly basis (see below) and the target of 80% for family-based placement continues to be our focus. This not only helps us achieve better outcomes for the child or young person, but frees up resources that can be used elsewhere. However, there are various challenges in meeting this target, from the complexity of the needs of the child or young person, to the availability of foster carers in appropriate localities.



**3.4** Almost 70% of SBC's spend on placements is externally purchased:



Almost 16% of the externally purchased placement spend (in blue, above) is on children who are not "Looked After" but who require support out with the Borders, for example a child with a disability who attends school in Edinburgh, who cannot currently be catered for within

the Scottish Borders or where parents have requested a specialist placement.

The Service aspiration is that the trends shown in the charts above are reversed, with more spend locally; supporting the majority of looked after children and young people in the Scottish Borders and meeting the needs of children with complex needs in local education provision thus reducing Parental requests.

- 3.5** Ensuring that all our looked after children attend school is a key part of avoiding the need for future service intervention and a key aim of the service is to avoid exclusions, avoiding the longer terms issues that looked after children and care leavers traditionally face in later life, for example, homelessness and unemployment. Already, through changes to support within schools, rates have come down significantly and are now the lowest they have been in over two years. This should have a positive impact on attainment for looked after children, as well their chances of achieving a positive destination when leaving school.

2014/15	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	% Overall Exclusion relating to LAC Pupils
Aug-14	0	0	0%
Sep-14	0	5	9%
Oct-14	0	5	17%
Nov-14	0	2	8%
Dec-14	0	2	11%
Jan-15	0	3	10%
Feb-15	1	4	13%
Mar-15	0	2	5%
Apr-15	1	1	18%
May-15	0	1	4%
Jun-15	0	1	7%
Aug-15	0	0	0%
Sep-15	0	3	9%
Oct-15	0	0	0%

## 4 SERVICE CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENTS

### Accommodation: Recruitment and retention of foster carers

- 4.1** Since 2011, SBC's Fostering Service has seen a year on year increase in fostering households, aligned to an increase in children requiring foster care.
- 4.2** Scottish Borders Council is relatively competitive in terms of payment and remuneration of its foster carers in comparison with other local authorities. However, foster carers with independent agencies receive higher payments. In order to compete effectively in terms of recruitment, SBC's fostering team work hard to provide effective, responsive support to its carers and retention rates of carers is positive.

Several foster carers from independent agencies have recently moved to SBC appreciating the support and placement of local children over better financial support.

**4.3** In order to ensure a continued net increase in foster carers, the Resources Team, supported by SBC's Communications Team, has developed a Recruitment Action Plan. The Action Plan includes a variety of initiatives. These include:

- Updating and improving the website information for potential carers
- Updating publicity materials
- Using local and corporate media publications
- Linking with Partner agencies
- A supermarket / sporting events engagement plan Radio advertising
- Vacant shop front advertising
- Hosting an event for existing carers.

**4.4** Over the past five years Scottish Borders have contracted a specialist adolescent fostering service from Action for Children. This provides five singleton placements for adolescents and has been successful. The placing of young people in placements where they are the only foster child is particularly beneficial. The service specification is for eight placements but Action for Children are having difficulty recruiting foster carers within the Scottish Borders. Action for Children do not charge Scottish Borders Council for the three placements they are unable to provide, but this underlines the difficulty in recruiting suitable foster carers

#### **Accommodation: other issues**

**4.5** The Resources Team is committed to services development and plans are already in place to address not only the recruitment of foster carers, but permanence and adoption, participation, carer training and kinship care (which provides greater continuity for children).

**4.6** Particular areas of focus include development of better "out of hours" crisis management (particularly for adolescents), improvements to respite care and building alternatives to school exclusions, so that children are accessing education full time.

**4.7** The service is also developing quality assurance models for use with external providers to ensure that purchased placements are appropriate for children and young people from the Scottish Borders and provide best value in terms of provision.

#### **Children and young people requiring education out-with mainstream schools**

**4.8** As described, there are two main areas of need which require education out with the mainstream. These are Complex Needs and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs (SEBN). It should be noted that a child may have a number of different support needs and therefore fall

into multiple categories.

- 4.9** The goal is always to support and enable a child to remain in a mainstream school wherever possible. This is endorsed in the relevant legislation – the “presumption of mainstream” (*Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000*).
- 4.10** The legislation governing education and additional support for learning makes provision for parents to request a particular school for their child (placing request). While the education authority may decline a placing request on a number of grounds, it must be able to show that it can provide the same level and quality of support as the requested school. Parents have a right of appeal.

### **Complex Needs**

The types of support available for children with Complex Needs range from additional care and support in mainstream schools, for example through an Additional Needs Assistant, to highly specialised external accommodation and education facilities offering equipment such as hoists, sensory rooms, etc. as well as specialist staff.

SBC resources to support Complex Needs include:

- Additional Needs Assistants and Learning Support Teachers working in mainstream schools;
- Support Centres for primary aged pupils;
- Children Affected by Disability (CHAD) Social Workers.
- Sensory team including Teacher for the Visually Impaired, Teacher for the Deaf;
- Spectrum Support Team working with children on the autistic spectrum;
- Pre School Home Visiting Teacher for children with Complex Needs who are not yet of school age;
- Input of the Educational Psychology Service.

Provision for Complex Needs typically includes close joint working with healthcare providers. When assessing Complex Needs and the best provision for care and education, the needs of the child and the family are looked at holistically, including health needs, educational needs, and the needs of family for support and respite. Care planning needs to include multiple agencies and address the needs of the family as well as the child.

Complex Needs tend to increase as the child grows older. Improvements in health care mean that some children with complex needs are leading longer lives. In general, secondary schools are less well-resourced for supporting Complex Needs and children who can be maintained at primary school level may end up having to leave the authority to have their needs met at secondary age.

Our aim is to educate and care for all our children within the Scottish Borders wherever possible, as set out in our developing strategy

“Inclusion for All”. Therefore our resources for children with Complex Needs require to be addressed and strengthened. The key will be strengthening communication and trust with parents at the key stages of initial identification and assessment, and the transition to secondary school. Parents and carers need to be confident in the resources on offer for their children to ensure placing requests for external provision are reduced.

### **Social Emotional and Behavioural Needs (SEBN)**

Similarly to Complex Needs, there are a range of supports available for SEBN, from early intervention to specialist support. Internal resources include:

- Skilled and knowledgeable teaching staff and school management
- Home School Link Workers in locality offices
- Peripatetic Behaviour Support Teacher service
- Input of the Educational Psychology Service
- The Wilton Centre part time education support unit, including Alternatives to Exclusion and outreach service

- 4.11** As part of the move to a People Department, there has been considerable restructuring of services to create a unified Children and Young People’s Service, incorporating mainstream education, Additional Support for Learning, Community Learning and Development, and Children and Families’ Social Work.
- 4.12** This restructure includes a significant element of cultural change, building on existing models of joint working and shared responsibility for all children and young people in the Scottish Borders.
- 4.13** The restructured service includes the new posts of Inclusion Senior Lead Officer and Additional Support Needs Senior Lead Officer. These two posts will be key to developing cultural and service change to create the ethos of inclusion, ownership and support for all children in the Scottish Borders to which we aspire. This will result in earlier intervention and increased capacity within universal services, thus creating capacity in focused services to support more complex learning needs.
- 4.14** The cultural change will be led by our authority-wide “Inclusion for All” strategy, currently in development, to support and guide staff in achieving our goal of caring for and educating as many of our children as possible within the Borders.

## **5 RISKS AND MITGATIONS**

- 5.1** New legislative duties will place further pressure on the service, particularly around young people in continuing care. In addition to this, all Local Authorities are facing a picture of increasing need and reducing resources. The provision of specialist accommodation and education is a specialist business, reflected in rising costs and scarcity of carers and placements.



- 5.2** While every effort is made to support children and families before a crisis is reached, there are a number of children who have experienced serious trauma and loss in their lives. It is unlikely that they will be able to be brought back into their communities without significant input from specialist residential care and/or education facilities and the other professionals making up their team.
- 5.3** The service and the wider People Department Management Team have a realistic view of the challenges ahead. The current restructure and development of a Children and Young People's Service seeks to create a collective responsibility towards all our children and young people to ensure their needs are met.
- 5.4** There are some children and young people with severe and complex health needs or extreme challenging behaviour who cannot be accommodated and/or educated at home or in facilities within the Borders without compromising their care, education and/or health needs. The ongoing nature of their needs means this group require to be planned for in future budgets and into adulthood, as the level of support they require is unlikely to reduce. It is essential to develop good relationships with parents and carers in the early years as these children are identified and assessed, and again to support the transition from primary to secondary school. The allocated budget for out of authority placements (externally purchased placements) has displayed year on year growth both locally and nationally. The structure of the new Directorate and improvement actions are geared to managing the budget challenge. However, predictions highlight a significant pressure continuing.
- 5.5** Parental requests for education out with mainstream schools will continue to be received for children with additional needs. Strengthening our internal resources, both within mainstream schools and in specialist support will support us to meet our statutory duties regarding parental requests, while working towards our goal of retaining our children within the Borders wherever possible. Close working with our partner agencies, especially the NHS, and earlier intervention through our Early Years and Educational Psychology services will help to foster partnerships with families and carers. This will improve trust and communication and enable more effective joint planning for children's needs.
- 5.6** Systems and processes are in place to ensure decision-making is robust and all children and young people who are accommodated and/or are receiving specialist education are regularly reviewed. The review system ensures detailed plans are in place with the goal of meeting the individual child's needs in the most effective way possible, including efficiency of cost. Areas for further development have been identified and detailed action plans are in place to secure improvements.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1** Children and Young People's Service is committed to meeting the accommodation needs of Looked After Children and Young People locally where possible, of which the current Foster Carer Recruitment Action Plan is an important part. The Service would ask for the ongoing support of Members, and during the current campaign.
- 6.2** Our goal is to develop an organisational culture where our staff have the values, skills and necessary support to ensure our children receive the support, care and education they need to achieve their best outcomes, wherever possible here in the Borders in their local communities and mainstream schools.

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