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## **DEVELOPMENT PROJECT TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS**

**Briefing Note by Interim Service Director Children & Young People**

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### **EMERGENCY POWERS – COVID-19**

**28 May 2020**

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#### **1 DECISION(S) REQUIRED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1.1 I recommend that approval is given to:**

- (a) progress a new Development Project in partnership with Aberlour Childcare Trust and Scottish Borders Housing Association to create the Borders' first Residential and Housing Support Facility to support children and young people with complex needs in the Scottish Borders;**
- (b) agree to sell 631sq m of land at Tweedbank at a value of £75,000 to Scottish Borders Housing Association in order to provide a site for the development of a new complex needs residential facility;**
- (c) Commit to purchase complex needs placements for Borders children and young people with a year 1 one estimated cost of £125,000 per place.**
- (d) Note the project requires the Council to purchase a minimum of 4 places per annum for a period of 20 years to provide financial certainty to the scheme as set out in this report.**

#### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Aberlour Child Care Trust is a charity and has a long history of working with Scottish Borders Council providing complex needs respite care for children and young people.
- 2.2 There is a long established strategic objective of providing additional support services within the Borders and wherever possible preventing children being looked after and accommodated out with the Region. This paper developed jointly with Aberlour Childcare Trust and SBHA seeks to assist with meeting this objective, by doing things differently and preventing Borders' children being placed out with the Authority area; and if possible bringing those already in out-of-authority care back closer to their families and communities.

- 2.3 Aberlour is therefore proposing to develop an innovative residential facility that will offer a continuum of care for children and young people (aged 0-18) with complex care needs. This will ensure these individuals are able to stay in the Borders and that the Council will avoid costly external care placements while at the same time providing an option for increased respite which is currently limited by lack of suitable accommodation.
- 2.4 Aberlour will work in partnership with Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA). Aberlour is best placed to deliver the ongoing complex needs support service; SBHA has the skills and expertise to build and maintain the facility.
- 2.5 The two partners are working with the Council to site the new service and have identified the requirement for a central Borders location which will maximise access to children across the region and provide the ability to easily sell additional places to other neighbouring local authorities should these spaces be available after Borders needs have been met. The Council has identified the site adjacent to Tweedbank as providing a suitable location which benefits from the connectivity to the Borders Railway.
- 2.6 A suitably sized site has been valued by the Council's Estates team at £75,000, and it is proposed that this site be sold to SBHA generating a capital receipt.
- 2.7 The project will directly support the Council's **Fit for 2024** strategy by transforming the way complex needs support is provided for local children and families.
- 2.8 **The Future Challenge:** Some Borders children will require long-term residential care, but the Scottish Borders does not currently have a dedicated complex needs residential facility. Families have said that they want this support to be provided locally in future, to avoid children being placed in care outside the authority area, disconnected from their communities and schools. Families want to stay together, and this project has the potential to deliver that aim.
- 2.9 **Taking advantage of new opportunities:** the partners have come together to collaborate and do things differently. The aim is to improve the support available for children and families where children with complex needs can no longer live at home. The partnership will be open to change; is flexible and creative and seeks to attract the resources required to support families to succeed.
- 2.10 **Delivering the best outcomes for Borders communities:** keeping Borders families together and enabling children with complex needs to grow in their community is at the heart of this project. All partners agree that this is the best outcome we can achieve in terms of quality of life, sustainability of services, and value for money.

### 3 NEED AND DEMAND

- 3.1 The Council's Integrated Children's Plan (2017-20) calls for '*new partnerships*' to support children with complex needs; and that '*new approaches are needed*' to support all young people moving into adulthood.

The Children's Complex needs Residential Project will directly meet this need.

- 3.2 The Council currently uses a number of out of authority complex needs residential care placement providers, for example:
- One provider requires a 187-mile round trip for families/Social Work from central Borders.
  - Another requires a 107-mile round trip for families/Social Work from central Borders.
- 3.3 The current budget for out of authority placements is £5.93m per annum catering for 61 individuals, some of these children are in the type of complex needs placement this paper refers to. The new unit will cater for up to 8 children and young people who have complex needs who may otherwise suffer emotional and psychological distress due to a loss of connection with their families and communities as they cope with changes of residence, school, carers and peers. Both often have a negative impact on health and wellbeing, and often results in adverse impact on the pace of social and educational development and attainment.

## 4 THE PROJECT

- 4.1 Aberlour will deliver residential support for children and young people with complex physical, learning and emotional needs that combines round the clock care with a broad range of personalised complex needs support provision. An integrated service designed to meet the developmental needs of children and families through to seamless transition into adult life and supported employment or continued learning. It is envisaged that the new home will support those with a variety of needs including: challenging behavior; epilepsy; cerebral palsy; autistic spectrum disorder; complex physical difficulties; emotional and mental health difficulties.
- 4.2 The facility will provide care and support in a homely, welcoming environment, catering for both males and females. Children and young people will be supported with personal and intimate care, routines, communication, health needs and life skills. It will provide a creative therapeutic approach through a wide range of activities both in the facility and linking with local community activities to build resilience and encourage independence.
- 4.3 The facility will also cater for young people with complex needs who are transitioning through care towards independence/adult services. As well as their care provision, we will support these young people to access suitable training and employment opportunities; and help them connect with local community activities.
- 4.4 The residential facility will deliver a range of improved outcomes for the Borders:
- **Children and young people:** will have long-term residential and housing support in the Scottish Borders, keeping them close to their families, friends, and communities. Their education and community activities will not be disrupted, contributing to better wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and their families.
  - **Families:** they will be closer to their children and young people and will have reduced travel time and costs.

- 4.5 The facility will be 8-bedded with a footprint of 500sqm (the indicative land requirement is 631 sqm) that will provide quality living spaces combined with flexibility in service delivery. Initially the home will have 4 children's residential living spaces (0-16 years) and 4 singleton flats for young people (16+) with complex needs, linked by a communal space (see **Appendix 1** indicative building design/layout). The innovative design of the building will allow the configuration to change over time to meet Borders' needs, for example: 6 residential and 2 singleton flats, or 6 residential and 2 respite places.
- 4.6 The physical environment will be designed to be therapeutic, minimising triggers such as noise, light, heat, and over-stimulation, factors which can increase stress levels which manifest themselves in challenging behaviours. The accommodation will ensure that each child and young person has their own bedroom, with en-suite bathrooms.
- 4.7 The partners have identified the Council's site adjacent to Tweedbank as the prime location for the facility. This site is close to the Council's Leader Valley School for children with profound and complex needs based in Earlston, which it is envisaged will be used by the resident children and young people of primary school age. Secondary school age children and young people would attend local schools with enhanced Additional Support provision.

## 5 TIMESCALES AND RETURN FOR THE COUNCIL

- 5.1 The dates in the table below - given the current Covid19 pandemic - are an estimate and will be subject to revision in line with National Government guidelines. These dates are also reliant on the Masterplan timescales at the site near Tweedbank.

Key Milestones	Timescale
SBC Approval	May 2020
Inclusion within Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)	June 2020
Procure/Agree Design Team	July 2020
Agree design and Outline Cost Plan	September 2020
Planning Submission	October 2020
Building Warrant Application	April 2021
Planning & Building Warrant Approval	October 2021
Appoint Contractor	March 2022

- 5.2 By participating in the project the Council will benefit in the following ways:
- Up to 8 Borders children and young people with complex needs will be able to continue living in the Borders, close to their families, friends, communities and schools at a projected cost of £1m per annum (assuming all 8 beds were taken up by Scottish Borders Council)
  - The project will deliver a new state of the art complex needs residential care home in the Borders
  - The Council are able to have the future needs of children with complex needs met through the flexible design of the new care facility
  - The ability to replicate the service which will be of national significance (due to its innovation and partnership development approach) to meet local needs, through a dynamic cross-sectoral development partnership

- 5.3 The Council will further benefit by purchasing places at a lower unit cost than the current range of local authority placements, the average cost of

which is £96,721 per annum. Individual costs can range from £4,000 for educational support without accommodation, up to £270,000 per residential place. At present, the Council funds 22 places costing over £100,000 per annum in out of authority care and education establishments. There will be further indirect saving from reductions in travel costs for families and reductions in Social Work staff travel time administering care placements that can be over 100 miles away.

- 5.4 Purchasing singleton 'transition' flats offers the Council potential savings on costly continuing care placements. Similar to the residential placements, families and Social Workers will greatly reduce costs associated with long travel and complicated administration. The transition flats will also free up residential spaces for new placements providing a continuum of care.

## **7 IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Financial**

(a) **Capital Costs**

SBHA will design, build and finance the complex needs development project and provide the ongoing maintenance. Capital costs of circa £1.1m including the cost of land valued at £75,000 which will be purchased from the Council.

- (b) The arrangement will require a lease arrangement between SBHA and Aberlour. The singleton 'transitional' homes can attract Housing Association Grant (HAG), with a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) to be offered to Tenants at a social housing rent and the project will require to be included in the Scottish Housing Investment Plan (SHIP). There would be potential for a nomination agreement to form a schedule as part of the lease for SBC to refer to the transitional homes.

- (c) Discussions with the Council's Housing Strategy Team and the Scottish Government More Homes Division are ongoing to confirm the value of grant this could attract. In the meantime, the costs and savings in this paper assume a nominal value of £80,000 HAG.

(d) **Revenue Costs**

Aberlour will deliver the complex needs living support service from the new facility. The Council will be asked to approve purchase of 4 of the 8 beds, with first refusal on the other 4. This will be a long-term purchase guarantee (20 years has been suggested) to provide revenue security for the development. If the Council does not utilise all the beds, then the additional placements will be sold nationally to other local authorities. Demand for quality complex needs care placements is high across Scotland.

- (e) There is a financial risk for Aberlour if all the beds are not utilised to a high occupancy rate. However, taking account of the need and demand in the Borders, future predictions that need will continue to grow in the medium to long-term, and Aberlour's experience of managing a number of similar residential and housing support facilities in Fife and the Highlands, the partnership does not anticipate revenue sustainability issues.

- (f) There is a financial risk for SBHA. The model is based on a capital appraisal requiring annual cash-flows over a 30-year period payback period. This is based on assumptions for annual rental increases based on CPI plus 1%. A long-term partnership agreement will mitigate SBHA's risk of the project ending before capital investment is repaid. Flexible design for change of future use will also mitigate this risk and complement the master plan of the area near Tweedbank.
- (g) Aberlour has undertaken an exercise reviewing the anticipated placement costs for the new residential home as compared to the costs the Council currently pay for external residential placements. The indicative revenue saving that the new home could deliver for the Council per week, per child/ young person is approximately **£250\***.

This could result in the following revenue savings for the Council:

**Cumulative indicative Council savings:**

1 year @ 4 placements = £55,000  
 5 years @ 4 placements = £275,000  
 10 years @ 4 placements = £550,000

If the Council was to use all 8 residential and transition homes, then the indicative savings could be (\*\*):

1 year @ 8 placements = £110,000  
 5 years @ 8 placements = £550,000  
 10 years @ 8 placements = £1,100,000

\* Based on average SBC residential costs not including 15% overhead costs (Audit Scotland best practice)

\*\* Based on the Council reducing existing residential continuing care placements that accommodate 16+ aged young people due to a lack of transition homes.

- h) The costs of placements will be from the exiting Out of Authority placement budget by recycling existing budget when children in external care placements. As such no additional financial resources to support this project are requested and it is hoped that over time that the facility will deliver savings against the costs of external placements elsewhere. The cost savings noted above are indicative based on average costs and in reality will vary depending on the needs of the individual children placed in the unit.

## 7.2 Risk & Mitigations

The report fully describes all the elements of risk that have been identified in relation to this project. However, given the scale of this project, an appropriate governance structure and risk register will be developed. Appropriate consultation with stakeholders will be built into the process. These elements will involve all partners involved in the project to ensure transparency.

## 7.3 Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal and it is anticipated that there are no adverse equality implications.

## 8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Executive Director, Finance & Regulatory services, the Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer, and the Chief Officer Audit and Risk have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.
- 8.2 The Convener, the Leader of the Administration and the Leader of the Opposition are being consulted and any questions will be responded to by relevant Officers. Any comments received during the consultation will be considered by the Chief Executive in arriving at her decision.

### Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Stuart Easingwood	Interim Service Director Children & Young People

### APPROVED:

Chief Executive: Tracey Logan Date: 4 June 2020

#### Having consulted -

Leader of the Administration: Cllr Shona Haslam Date: 2 June 2020

Convener: Cllr David Parker Date: 2 June 2020

Leader of the Opposition: Cllr Stuart Bell Date: 2 June 2020