

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 16 FEBRUARY 2021**

**TEMPORARY AMENDED OPERATING HOURS AT STRATHMORE CENTRE**

**REPORT BY KATHRYN LINDSAY – DIRECTOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND JUSTICE**

**ABSTRACT**

This report sets out proposals to continue the amended opening hours for Strathmore Centre, our respite centre for children and young people with complex and profound disabilities. The Centre delivers periods of respite agreed as required to fulfil packages of care assessed through the Self Directed Support process. This is the second request to Committee following approval in November 2020 (Report no 278/20) to amend the operating hours until 31 January 2021.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Notes the decision of the Director of Children, Families and Justice, using her delegated powers as Chief Social Work Officer, to continue to amend the operating hours and operate Strathmore Centre on a full-time basis from 31 January 2021 until date of this Committee due to continued restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic;
- (ii) Approves the continued full-time operation of the Strathmore Centre from the date of this Committee for an indefinite period.
- (iii) Requires the Director of Children, Families and Justice keep the opening hours of the provision under review and to vary these in accordance with operational need.
- (iv) Notes the feedback from some of the children and families who have accessed the service during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following outcomes contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2030 and the Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families.

- Children are given the best start in life;
- Physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing is improved;
- There are more opportunities for people to achieve success.
- Our children and young people who experience particular inequalities and disadvantage will achieve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes comparable with all other children and young people.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Strathmore Centre is a part time residential respite centre for children and young people with complex and profound disabilities. It is part of the wider Children with Disabilities Service. The Strathmore Centre usually opens for 5 days every fortnight during term time and tends to close or offer limited outreach/day care support during the period between Christmas and New Year.

3.2 The Centre continues to remain open on a full time basis in order to provide ongoing, critical care respite to families as part of their self-directed support packages. This support has been vital to allow families to continue in their caring roles and would not have been possible without operating on a full-time basis as a result of the impact of infection control measures.

3.3 Feedback from some of the families who use the centre note that the following has been extremely positive with comments below proving just how vital the ongoing service is to families:

‘Without the support we would be lost, it is truly a life saver’

'I can't stress how important that was for us as a family. The ladies of Strathmore are truly wonderful people, they gave up their time and incurred extra risk in order to provide the services that we needed'

'We would not have made it without this support'

'Respite is a great support for us as a family, it's the only support we have, so it's crucial for us that we can have a caring break'

- 3.4 Given that current national guidance does not appear likely to change significantly over the coming months, it is highly unlikely that the centre will be able to offer the number of hours of respite support needed within the previous operating model. The current temporary operating model has worked well since July 2020 and staff have accommodated and continue to lend their support to the rota changes implemented to support the extended operating hours model.
- 3.5 Currently we have 26 young people accessing Strathmore Centre for respite. Each young person has an individual allocation varying from 7 overnights per year to 59 overnights per year. At present, the total number of nights required for 2021 is 510. Given the ongoing adjustments which will be required until the Covid-19 pandemic is over, the unit will have to be open for a minimum of 293 days in 2021 to support the current demand. These figures do not include any crisis/outreach support that may also be required and would leave only 72 days in the year to accept new referrals/crisis/outreach support.
- 3.6 The respite packages in place for all the young people who attend Strathmore Centre have been assessed as essential in order to support families to continue in their caring roles. The impact of being unable to provide these packages is great, and is likely to cause additional pressure on families, with the potential need for future crisis intervention.

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 In order to continue to be able to offer residential respite to the maximum number of children and young people, whilst complying with the necessary infection control guidance, it is proposed that:  
Strathmore Centre continues to be open on a full-time basis for an indefinite period with the requirement that the Director of Children, Families and Justice keep the opening hours of the provision under review and to vary these in accordance with operational need.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The anticipated additional cost for this proposal is largely related to staffing, specifically payment of additional sleepover allowances. It's difficult to calculate a final additional cost as this is reliant on the number of additional sleepovers ultimately required. For context however, it can be noted that each additional 10 sleepovers incur additional staffing costs of £840.

The ultimate total cost will be met within the current revenue budget. All staff are currently on relevant residential contracts.

There are no other anticipated financial implications.

#### **6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 **Risk:** There is no significant risk related to the current proposals. However, should Committee be minded not to agree the proposals, the service would be unable to fulfil care packages for all children assessed as requiring respite support. This is likely to cause additional pressure on families. Such unmet need can result in the breakdown of existing support arrangements and the need for crisis intervention. This is not in children's best interests. The realisation of such risks would also carry significant financial implications for the Council should any of the children's circumstances deteriorate to the point that alternative care provision becomes necessary on an ongoing basis.
- 6.2 **Equalities Implications:** The proposals in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). As the proposal is to continue with an extended service, there is no negative impact and an equalities impact assessment is not required.

#### **7. CONCLUSION**

7.1 This report sets out the rationale that, Strathmore Centre continues to be open on a full-time basis for an indefinite period with the requirement that the Director of Children, Families and Justice keep the opening hours of the provision under review and to vary these in accordance with operational need.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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