

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFORMATION REPORT ON THE ONGOING OPERATING HOURS AT STRATHMORE CENTRE

REPORT BY KATHRYN LINDSAY – DIRECTOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND JUSTICE

ABSTRACT

This report provides information to members regarding the ongoing amended opening hours for Strathmore Centre (see Committee report 40/21), which is our short break centre for children and young people with complex and profound disabilities. The Centre delivers periods of short breaks agreed as required to fulfil packages of care, and meet identified needs assessed through the Self-directed Support process. A decision is not required in terms of the current Scheme of Delegation to Officers and the Order of Reference of Committees.

1. BACKGROUND

Angus Council, at a special meeting on 19 November 2013 took a number of decisions which changed the way the Council conducted its committee business. Fundamental to this was the streamlining of processes with a focus on key strategy and policy matters.

One element of this was the production of “Information Reports”. These Information Reports summarise information that would in the past have gone to a Council Committee for “Noting”.

The information schedules are in accordance with that principle.

2. SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION – SCHEDULES

Strathmore Centre is a part time residential short breaks centre for children and young people with complex and profound disabilities. It is part of the wider Children with Disabilities Service. Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic Strathmore Centre generally operated for 5 days every fortnight during term time and tended to close or offer limited outreach and day care support during the period between Christmas and New Year. This equated to availability for approximately 140 nights per year, with support offered to a maximum of 3 young people per night of opening, thus a total of 420 bed nights provided per year. A maximum of 200 hours of support per year was provided in addition to overnight support.

Since July 2020 Strathmore Centre has been open on a full-time basis in order to provide ongoing, critical care and short breaks 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, which impacts on the number of children Strathmore Centre can accommodate at any given time.

Committee approval was given on 16 February 2021 that Strathmore Centre can 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. The Director of Children, Families and Justice reviews the opening hours of the provision regularly, with the latest review taking place on 29 March 2022, when Delegated authority approved for a further 6 months, to offer the service the ability to plan and provide certainty for families for the forthcoming summer holiday period.

In the intervening period a full review will be progressed for Strathmore Centre in order to consider how we can best meet current and future demands and the capacity of the service.

Due to the ongoing need for infection control measures and the current staffing compliment, Strathmore Centre continues to operate at reduced capacity, generally continuing to have 2 children overnight each night, with a third in for day care at the same time. There have been a few of occasions where it has been possible to have a child in for day care, however this is only where matching, and staffing allows. This has continued to support the children to better meet outcomes in relation to socialisation, as well as enabling more capacity for introductions of new people and the acceptance of new referrals.

From 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 Strathmore Centre was able to offer 470 overnights and 844 hours of outreach/day care support.

In total, 33 children and young people are currently supported at Strathmore Centre. This is through overnight short breaks and outreach support which can be provided from Strathmore, in the community or within Broomfield Resource Centre, Montrose. The regular short breaks range from 7 to 61 overnights per year, per child. At present, the total number of nights projected as required for 2022 is 524 and the total number of hours for outreach is 1,578.

Since 1 January 2022 there has been 8 new referrals: 3 for overnight short breaks and 5 for outreach support. However, 4 children are currently on the waiting list until a place becomes available. From 31 May 2022, 4 young people will be leaving the service as they are transitioning to adult services.

The packages of care in place for the children who attend Strathmore Centre have been assessed as required in order to support families to continue in their caring roles. The impact of being unable to provide these packages is significant, and is likely to cause additional pressure on families, with the potential need for future crisis intervention. Such intervention inevitably comes at a high cost, both financially and emotionally to children, young people and their families.

Strathmore Centre was inspected by the Care Inspectorate in December 2021, and Schedule 2 details the outcome of that positive inspection.

As part of our on-going self-evaluation, feedback is routinely sought from families and young people who use Strathmore Centre and comments have included the following:

'My son loves his nights it's great seeing him come out of his shell after all the lockdowns, thank you'

'I like having my say, being heard by staff and having freedom of choice in activities and meals'

'I like seeing my friends and not having to bother my Mum'

'My son's confidence has grown massively, and he has made new friends, tried new foods, learned how to make things and is gaining more independence. He is also experiencing things I wouldn't be able to do with him'

'I like seeing my friends, having fun and getting to know everyone'

As noted, the opening hours at Strathmore Centre will continue to be regularly reviewed by the Director of Children, Families and Justice and members are advised that the centre continues to provide an essential service for those children and young people with complex and profound disabilities who are in greatest need.

3. REPORT AUTHOR

This report and associated schedules have been compiled by Peter McDonnell, Service Leader, who can be contacted by emailing childrenandlearning@angus.gov.uk if you would like further information.

List of Appendices: N/A