

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**FAMILY, EDUCATION AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE – 20 FEBRUARY 2024**

**TAYSIDE BAIRNS' HOOSE PATHFINDER PROGRAMME**

**REPORT BY KIRSTY LEE, INTERIM DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND JUSTICE**

**1. ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to provide members with information relating to the planning and development of the Bairns House pathfinder programme in Tayside following the successful bid submitted to Scottish Government by Angus Council, Dundee City Council, Perth & Kinross Council, NHS Tayside, and Police Scotland. The Tayside Bairns' Hoose pathfinder is one of 6 areas selected in Scotland to pilot and test specific trauma responsive approaches to supporting children and families involved in the child protection system. The Tayside programme will explore specific Bairns' Hoose standards to inform the Bairns' Hoose Blueprint for Scotland with full national implementation from 2027 onwards.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES**

The Bairns' Hoose Pathfinder programme relates to and contributes to the following priorities:

**Caring for our People**

We will protect those in our communities who are at risk of or have experienced significant harm.

Improve physical, mental health and wellbeing.

**Caring for our Place**

Make our local services accessible.

**3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Family, Education and Justice Committee:

- (i) Have due regard to the content of the report and progress towards designing and testing trauma informed supports and services for children, young people and families involved in child protection in line with the National Standards for Bairns' Hoose;
- (ii) Have due regard to the grant allocation for Tayside for 2023/24;
- (iii) Endorse the Tayside Bairns' Hoose programme plan; and
- (iv) Direct that a report is brought to a future Family, Education and Justice Committee on the findings of the Tayside Pathfinder programme and the future delivery model for Angus.

**4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 In June 2023, the Scottish Government published 'Bairns' Hoose - Scottish Barnahus: vision, values and approach'. Bairns' Hoose is based on the well evaluated model first developed in Iceland, Barnahus, which ensures there is a child-centred and welcoming place for children, young people and families involved in child protection.

4.2 Bairns' Hoose is a transformational, whole-system approach to delivering child protection, justice, health and recovery services to child victims and witnesses of abuse and harm. The overall vision of a Bairns' Hoose in Scotland is that all children who have been victims of or have been witness to abuse or violence; as well as children under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused significant harm or abuse, will have access to trauma informed recovery, support and

justice coordinated in one place. The Bairns' Hoose is there to uphold children's rights and ensure the best interests of the child is the primary consideration in all actions concerning them.

- 4.3 Ministers have agreed that these overarching principles are essential, underpinned by national Bairns' Hoose Standards, which provide a framework for a Bairns' Hoose model in Scotland.
- 4.4 Phase 1 of the National implementation is the pathfinder phase which invited applications for local areas to become Bairns Hoose pathfinders. A Pathfinder is a test site, that will act as a proof of concept by testing the application of the Bairns Hoose Standards in practice in the Scottish context. Using a series of tests of change, it forms part of a quality improvement and service design process.
- 4.5 Pathfinder applicants were obliged to meet the following criteria:
- Be a Pathfinder Partnership from 2023 – 2025.
  - Work towards becoming a Bairns' Hoose and to apply the Standards.
  - Test Standards in current context and conduct GAP analysis on application of the Standards and report on findings.
  - Comprise of a collaboration across all three statutory partners (Health, Social Work, Police) with demonstrable links with third sector and education partners.
  - Meaningfully involve children and young people with lived experience of child protection and justice processes in the design and delivery of the Pathfinder work.
  - Develop trauma responsive approaches across the Bairns' Hoose Pathfinder partner organisations, systems, and workforces in line with "Creating Trauma-Informed Change: What, Why and How A Quality Improvement Framework for Trauma-Informed Organisations, Systems and Workforces in Scotland".
  - Gather, analyse, and share relevant data for learning and monitoring at regular intervals.
  - Share information and learning openly and honestly.
- 4.6 Building on strong collaborative work in child protection across Tayside, partners from the 3 local authorities met with Police Scotland and NHS Tayside and agreed that Tayside were well placed to submit a joint application. As a 'pathfinder', local areas will influence and test the design of the Scottish Bairns Hoose model, identify barriers and enablers in the local context and access funds to support targeted activity.

## **5. CURRENT POSITION**

- 5.1 On 24<sup>th</sup> October, the Scottish Government advised that the Tayside partnership bid had been successful. Subsequently funding of £286,201 has been awarded for the financial year 2023/24 to provide the following activities to support the programme plan:
- 5.1.1 A full time Bairns' Hoose coordinator – the coordinator post will be hosted by Perth and Kinross Council and provide programme support including enabling the involvement of children, young people and families in the design and delivery of the activities described below and regular impact monitoring and reporting on the key project milestones, both locally and to Scottish Government.
- 5.1.2 A commissioned service to provide additional support to families impacted by Child Protection issues – Dundee City Council will conduct a procurement exercise with third party providers. The successful service will provide support on a voluntary basis to families both pre and post Child Protection investigation particularly when there is no requirement for ongoing Social Work involvement but there are identified needs. We recognise that the Child Protection process can be very difficult for families and there is a need to support families both during the investigation and beyond.
- 5.1.3 Reconfiguration and refurbishment of facilities at Bellevue House in Arbroath – using trauma informed principles and taking account of lived experience of children, young people and families who have been involved in child protection processes, improvements will be made to Bellevue to deliver access to supports and services in line with the Bairns' Hoose standards. Whilst there are significant developments at Bellevue House, the premise of the Bairns House pathfinder in Angus (and Tayside) is to ensure that the Bairns House standards do not depend on the provision of a single central location but will be applied wherever intervention takes place and that should wherever possible be somewhere that meets the needs and wishes of the child or young person.

- 5.1.4 Replacement of recording equipment for the recording of Joint Investigative Interviews – this will ensure there are good quality recordings where children require to be jointly interviewed.
- 5.1.5 Enhancement of Forensic Medical Facilities – NHS will lead on the improvement of children’s experience of medical examination applying trauma informed and responsive approaches, built on the existing foundation of upholding children’s rights. Forensic medicals will continue to be carried out in Dundee.
- 5.1.6 Additional Medical resource to support families – in accordance with the point above.
- 5.2 A subsequent bid will be required for 2024/25 and officers are currently working on this via the established Tayside Bairns’ Hoose steering group. Currently the steering group meets fortnightly and includes officers at Service Leader equivalent from the three Local authorities, NHS Tayside and Police Scotland. The steering group will provide progress reports to the relevant Child Protection Committees.
- 5.3 It is planned the pathfinder project will conclude in March 2025 with a more detailed timeline to be established by the Bairns’ Hoose project coordinator.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

There is no requirement for any addition to the Corporate Risk Register.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY**

A screening assessment has been undertaken and a full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

## **10. CONSULTATION**

The Director of Finance and the Director of Legal, Governance and Change have been consulted on the terms of the Report.

**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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List of Appendices: Equality Impact Assessment