

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Lifelong Learning Committee 25 August 2021

FINAL UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REACH

Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)
(Report No. 21/135)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides Lifelong Learning Committee with the final update on the progress of the REACH project.

In January 2019, all elements of the team were in place and a comprehensive service was offered to young people and their families across Perth and Kinross, who were considered to be 'on the edge of care'. As part of the continuous learning process, there has been ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of REACH and detailed information is provided on the positive impact this support has had on the lives of these young people and their families.

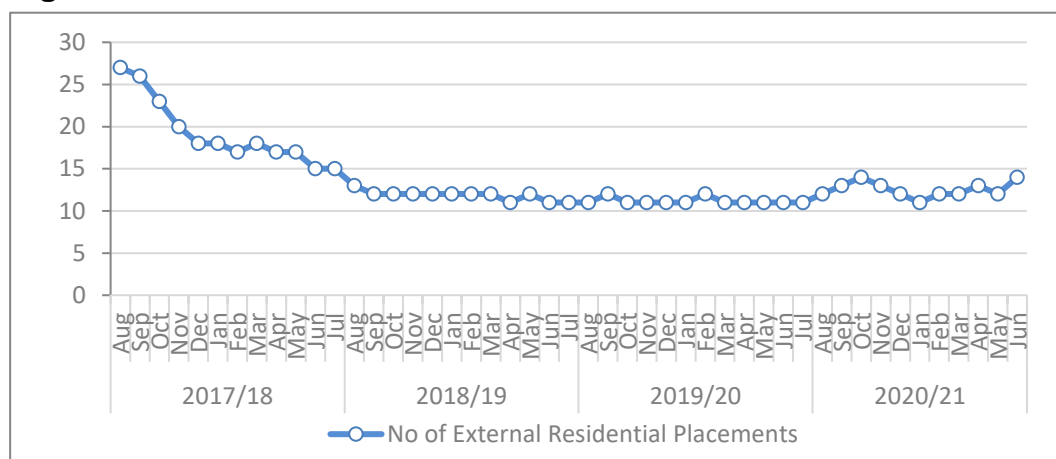
1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The implementation of REACH in Perth and Kinross originated from the Transformation Project on the Review and Remodelling of Residential Care. An initial report to Council in August 2017 ([Report No. 17/262 refers](#)) approved funding to implement this innovative service. Thereafter, an implementation plan was approved at Lifelong Learning Committee in November 2017 (Report No. 17/358, private update) with a requirement to provide annual reports until 2021. This report provides the final update on progress of this successful transformation.
- 1.2 REACH has been created to provide a 'one stop', multi-disciplinary response to address the needs of young people aged 12-18 years, and to their families across Perth and Kinross. The primary focus for REACH is to offer intensive and flexible support and help improve outcomes for young people who are looked after or who are at risk of becoming accommodated and are therefore "on the edge of care".
- 1.3 REACH provides individualised support and employs the skills of a dedicated multi-disciplinary team to help young people remain in their families, schools, and communities, and to prevent the need to move to alternative, residential care. The long-term aim is to enable young people to flourish within their family and community and to become healthy, resilient, and resourceful adults.
- 1.4 The implementation of REACH is one of several interventions helping to reduce reliance on external residential care placements. The original aim for REACH was that by 2022, the only children and young people who will require to be supported in residential care will be those for whom this is assessed as

being the only way of meeting their specific needs. This fundamental aim has already been achieved and since inception, REACH has contributed to reducing the numbers of young people in residential care by 48%.

- 1.5 At 30 June 2021, 14 children were in an external residential care placement. Due to the very small numbers and nature of this indicator, it is expected that this figure will continue to experience small fluctuations whilst remaining significantly lower than the August 2017 figure of 27 children.

Figure 1: Number of External Placements



- 1.6 In meeting this aim, the reduction in residential care costs had been projected to provide the financial resources required to sustain the entire REACH service provision beyond 2021, which highlights the end of the project period. This element of transformation has been closely monitored by the REACH Project Board and there is confidence that this objective has been achieved.
- 1.7 In 2019, Perth and Kinross Council was ranked 1st out of 32 Scottish Local Authorities in terms of the balance of care for the percentage of looked after children being looked after in the community at 96.1%. In 2020, after a drop of 0.5% the Council was ranked 2nd out of 32. It is recognised that REACH contributes to Perth and Kinross Council being one of the top performing Councils in this [Local Government Benchmarking Framework](#) indicator.
- 1.8 The REACH Project Board met monthly during the implementation period and now meets quarterly. The Board will continue to meet until 2022, and will support the ongoing development of REACH and support the roll out of 'lessons learned' throughout this transformation.

2. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 2.1 On 9 January 2019, the fully established REACH team moved to a dedicated and refurbished building adjacent to Almondbank House in Perth. This completed the implementation phase of this innovative resource and enabled the multi-disciplinary team to function effectively.
- 2.2 A broad range of key stakeholders attended a formal launch event on 25 April 2019 with young people and their families also present. This opportunity

enabled the team to showcase the principles and ethos of REACH, to invite questions and to seek views on the aims and objectives of the service. During 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic restricted direct consultation and engagement with stakeholders, but this has not prevented virtual communication. A virtual briefing for Elected Members took place in March 2021 which allowed further exploration of the benefits of REACH.

- 2.3 The team operate on a 24 hour a day and 7 days a week basis with Social Workers and Social Care staff providing duty cover. This working model enables REACH to support families when they are most in need of support whether this is during the day, in the evening or at the weekend. The highly skilled and adaptable workforce has completed targeted training to ensure they have the knowledge and experience to respond to the current needs of the young people who require their support.
- 2.4 The provision of integral support from the Clinical Psychologist and Speech and Language Therapist complements the expertise of a dedicated Teacher and specialist Social Workers, a Youth Worker and Senior Social Care Officers. This multi-disciplinary expertise has been enhanced recently through Family Group Decision Making which has proven to be a valuable additional resource. The coordination of this range of professional skills has demonstrated the strength of providing holistic care and support to some of the most vulnerable young people in Perth and Kinross. A detailed outline of the impact of the work of the REACH team is provided in Appendix 1.
- 2.5 The focus and commitment of this team is demonstrated in the positive outcomes achieved for young people, many of whom have experienced extremely complex and challenging circumstances. Case studies which help outline the nature of the support received are provided in Appendix 2.
- 2.6 Central to the ethos of REACH is that every effort is made to ensure all young people can be supported to remain in their own family, school, and community, where this is safe to do so. They are fully encouraged to flourish and become healthy, resilient, and resourceful adults who can achieve their full potential. This is in full accordance with the principles of [The Promise \(2020\)](#) and reflects the requirements of the [United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#).
- 2.7 The ongoing evaluation of the impact of REACH encompasses the benefits realisation plan and will continue to help inform future transformational change projects.
- 2.8 The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the extent of inequalities and further exacerbated levels of poverty across Scotland. It has been essential to ensure measures have been in place to protect the most vulnerable, and the service offered by REACH has continued to offer a direct service over a 24-hour period, seven days a week, with some adaptations, despite the restrictions faced throughout this period.

3. PROJECT IMPACT AND MEASURING SUCCESS

- 3.1 Since the implementation of REACH, there is compelling evidence that this model provides good value for money for Perth and Kinross Council and wider Community Planning Partners. Alongside other initiatives, REACH has contributed to cost avoidance of at least £4.2m over the last three years. This has been achieved by combining both preventative and restorative approaches:
- Meeting the needs of young people who were currently in external residential care by either enabling the young people to return home or supporting the young person into independence.
 - Providing 24/7 support to retain young people in their own homes or communities to prevent the need for residential care.
- 3.2 In delivering these services, REACH continues to minimise costs to the wider Community Planning Partnership by preventing young people entering the care system and providing improved outcomes. The expenditure commitments associated with care experienced young people are reduced and by diverting children on the edge of care from NHS pathways, for example, CAMHS and Speech and Language Therapy costs for partners are reduced. These specialist roles, which are embedded within REACH, ensure earlier identification of needs and swift intervention which contributes to reducing the overall costs whilst simultaneously, improving outcomes for young people.
- 3.3 From implementation in 2019, REACH has successfully supported 53 young people who were prevented from entering the looked after care system (Appendix 3).
- 3.4 From 1 August 2020 to 30 June 2021, REACH supported 60 young people, 22 of whom were 'looked after' young people before they began working with REACH. Of the 22 young people, 13 were cared for away from home and for whom the aim was to return to their family or local community. Seven of those young people are now no longer looked after away from home.
- 3.5 Throughout the reporting period, there have been specific activities to ensure that the processes, practice, and culture within REACH continues to develop and evolve. Regular staff support and supervision, team meetings and self-evaluation sessions continue to help embed a culture of improvement. This approach has promoted autonomy with associated accountability in decision making which supports positive outcomes for young people.
- 3.6 The established performance indicators have been updated to demonstrate progress (Appendix 4). This provides detail on identified outcomes throughout the first two years of REACH being fully operational and provides the framework for continuous improvement.
- 3.7 A critical element of success has been the invaluable contribution of the Performance and Evaluation Officer who has reinforced the importance of

ongoing evaluation amongst the team. Alongside quantitative data, powerful qualitative information has also been collated in the form of case studies and in evaluation forms from stakeholders. In addition to rigorous monitoring, data is being regularly analysed and the service delivery model is flexible enough to be adapted where this has been required.

4. FINANCE

- 4.1 The REACH Team is funded from existing Education and Children's Services budgets which were transferred from the Community Support Team and Services for Young People. These budgets did not cover the total running costs for the team and therefore an earmarked reserve of £1,700,000 was agreed at Full Council ([Report No.17/262 refers](#)). This was created via budget management measures within Education and Children's Services (£700,000), an allocation from Council Reserves (£500,000) and from Transformation and Organisational Reserves (£500,000) to cover the transitional costs.
- 4.2 Over financial years 2018/19 to 2020/21, a total of £440,000 has been used from this reserve to contribute towards the funding of the REACH Team. Council approved that £416,000 be drawn down over two years ([Report No. 20/173 refers](#)) from the earmarked reserve to fund additional social work support to meet the demand pressures in other parts of Services for Children, Young People and Families. The Project Board continue to monitor the budget and the residential care budget at quarterly board meetings. The Board is satisfied that current projections indicate that the reduction in the residential care budget is sufficient and is on target to meet the anticipated financial expectations to sustain REACH at the end of the transition phase.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The successful implementation of REACH concludes work on the Transformation Project on the Review and Remodelling of Residential Care. Lessons learned from this process can now be adopted within other areas of practice as there has been a clear evaluation of the development of this resource. Key to success has been the provision of a 'one-stop' service comprising a range of professionals with a shared ethos and culture in how best to support vulnerable young people and their families.
- 5.2 The lessons learned from the effective realisation of REACH provides a firm foundation for fulfilling Perth and Kinross Council's commitments to [Keeping The Promise](#) and upholding children's rights as stipulated in the [United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#).
- 5.3 REACH is committed to continuous improvement and staff have actively sought feedback from young people, their families and from other professionals throughout the period of growth.
- 5.4 The ongoing promotion of REACH will require ongoing investment in staff time and resources, but this has proved to be a cost-effective means of providing the best possible outcomes for our most vulnerable young people.

5.5 There is clear evidence of success over the four years of development and against the earliest aims of REACH. Examples of these are:

- Young people are safe at home and have not become Looked After.
- Young people have been supported to build, restore, and strengthen relationships with their family and community.
- Young people who cannot stay with their family now live in a Kinship Care Placement where it is the best option for the young person.
- Young people have the opportunity to work with professionals to improve their emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Young people can make their needs known and clearly express themselves.
- Young people are meaningfully engaged in education, employment, or volunteering.
- Increased support has been provided for young people aged 16 plus who are not eligible for Throughcare and Aftercare and who would benefit from enhanced involvement from the universal provision.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- Notes the success of this transformation project in its final year of implementation; and
- Requests that a measure on the balance of care within REACH is incorporated in the reporting of the Education and Children's Services, Business Management, and Improvement Plan (BMIP).

Author

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Approved

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	No
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	No
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	No
Strategic Environmental Assessment	No
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	No
Legal and Governance	No
Risk	No
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

This report relates to Objective No. (i).

Corporate Plan

1.2 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives.

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective No. (i)

1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Vision, Values and Priorities in respect of the following key Priority area:

- Care and Equity

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 The REACH project is being delivered within the current resources which includes the £1,700,000 allocated by Council in August 2017 with anticipated reduction in the Residential Schools budget over three years.

Workforce

2.2 The planned workforce changes are now in place.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 As part of this project development there has been investment in existing council property.

3. Assessments

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

The proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA Strategic

Environmental Assessment

3.2 The proposals have been considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

3.3 N/A

Legal and Governance

3.4 N/A

3.5 N/A

Risk

3.6 N/A

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 Education & Children's Services Senior Management Team, the Finance and Governance Manager and the REACH Project Board have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

External

- 4.2 N/A

5. Communication

- 5.1 There has been a formal launch of the project which took place in April 2019.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – REACH Impact Summary

Appendix 2 – REACH Case Studies

Appendix 3 – REACH Overview Infographic

Appendix 4 – REACH Performance Measures 1 August 2018 – 30 June 2021