



REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 28 NOVEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: CHILDREN'S SERVICES SOCIAL WORK, REVIEW OF SPEND FOR SELF DIRECTED SUPPORT

BY: CHIEF OFFICER HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE MORAY

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee to review spend for Self Directed Support (SDS) in Children's Services.
- 1.2 The report is submitted to Council in terms of Section III (D)(4) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to reports from the Council's Chief Social Work Officer in terms of relevant legislation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee consider and note the review of spend for SDS in Children's Services.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report was first presented to the Moray Integration Joint Board Committee on 28 September 2023 as a result of delegation (para 15 of minute refers). It is now being presented to the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee as this was the source of the original request.
- 3.2 SDS was introduced to Children's Services in 2013/14. This is an approach which allows people who are eligible for social care support to have greater choice and control over how they receive these services. This means care services can be 'personalised' to individual needs and wishes. The result of this is that individuals can receive the right services for them as they are the experts in their own lives.

- 3.3 The legislative framework for SDS is the Social Care (SDS) (Scotland) Act 2013. It is also supported by the SDS Framework of Standards introduced in March 2021. The statutory guidance was updated in October 2022 to encompass the Framework of Standards. Other legislation includes the SDS (Direct Payments) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 and Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.
- 3.4 The assessment process for SDS is clear and follows the local authority's duty to assess under section 23 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. That is, for those where there is a disability or additional support need assessments are designed to identify unmet need and outcomes for children, young people and their families. This assessment process will also include the needs of young carers or parent carers. There is a consistent assessment format used which ensures that there is equity for children, young people and families during the assessment process.
- 3.5 The majority of care packages via SDS are assessed by the Disability Pod. This is a new team that was established in early 2023. Previously, care packages via SDS were assessed across the Area Teams. However, as part of the transformation programme it was decided to establish a Disability Pod. The purpose of this was to provide greater consistency and equity for children and young people with disabilities in Moray and to better support them and their families.
- 3.6 The Disability Pod has resulted in the effective sharing of information in relation to services and other supports. It has also allowed for the social workers in the Disability Pod to develop their knowledge and expertise in working with this specific group of children, young people and their families.
- 3.7 From 2014/15 to 2022/23 the need for SDS and associated care packages was relatively stable. However, from 2021/22 to 2022/23 there was an increase in care packages from 165 to 310. This resulted in an additional spend of £106,020.20.
- 3.8 The tool supporting the appropriate level of SDS is the Resource Allocation System. This is a tool which helps to guide the assessment in relation to determining the amount of finance to be provided. The Resource Allocation System identifies an indicative budget which is a starting point from which to develop a care package. Within the Resource Allocation System tool there is a price point which helps to calculate the indicative budget. The price point has recently been marginally reduced in order to support a more cost effective approach. This will continue to be reviewed to promote the best use of spend for SDS.
- 3.9 Care packages within SDS can be subject to alterations to reflect changing need. There are a number of stable care packages which can be reasonably predicted alongside its associated financial projection. However, there are a number of care packages where assessed need can change significantly. This can result in variability in the costs of care packages which can have an impact upon the overall spend for SDS. Although this creates challenges, we remain committed to offering families the support and flexibility that they need.

- 3.10 There is ongoing work with Accountancy to ensure accurate projecting and effective forecasting in relation to SDS. Accountancy and social work meet on a monthly basis to ensure that there is purposeful monitoring and reviewing of SDS. As part of this, Accountancy are closely aligned with the Resource Panel which is the forum where care packages are agreed. Taken together, this approach allows for effective communication and information sharing between the Social Work Management Team and Accountancy. This approach is embedded and is subject to constant improvement.
- 3.11 The Social Work Management Team is also working with Accountancy to ensure that there is clear understanding of the different options of SDS. This provides effective monitoring of the different options and ensures that there is a forum to identify and escalate any increasing spend in relation to SDS.
- 3.12 Linked with this, the Social Work Management Team work closely with commissioned services; that is, those services where there is an existing contract. This ensures that services are used effectively and avoids any unnecessary duplication between commissioned services and those which are spot purchased. This will ensure that children, young people and their families access the service that best meets their needs. It also ensures the best use of SDS spend.
- 3.13 Through the course of 2022/23 there have been a number of factors which are considered to have contributed to the recent increase in care packages.
- 3.14 There was an increase of 206% in 2022/23 for neuro-divergent children and young people accessing services to ensure positive outcomes. Linked to this, there was an increase in the number of care packages. The increase in the number of identified neuro-divergent children and young people has been seen nationally.
- 3.15 There is a limited range of targeted services available in Moray for our neuro-divergent children and young people. As such, children, young people and their families have been accessing SDS as a route to meet these assessed needs. The services for neuro-divergent young people is a key element within the Children's Services Plan 2023-26. This strategy will inform the provision of services for this group and will include the use of SDS.
- 3.16 The Scottish Government Summer Funding (SF) offer in 2021 provided support to children and young people to access play schemes and 1:1 support over the summer of 2021. This funding was a response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Following this, further support was requested by some of the families who had accessed the SF offer. This resulted in a number of new care packages to replicate the support from SF which had been of benefit to them. The SF offer has not continued where there has, therefore, been an ongoing impact upon SDS.
- 3.17 For these reasons, there was an increase in demand for care packages in 2022/23 and associated spend.

3.18 The Social Work Management Team has identified the following mitigations:

- Close working relationship between the Social Work Management Team and Accountancy; the aim of this is to improve oversight and ensure that there are clear escalation processes
- Increased monitoring and support in response to the establishment of the Disability Pod; the Disability Pod is continuing to develop and provides an opportunity to closely track SDS and associated costs
- Review of policies and procedures alongside the Policy and Procedure Team; this provides an opportunity to review the approach towards SDS in Children's Services.
- Ongoing review of price points and eligibility criteria for SDS; this review will include an emphasis on ensuring that care packages are targeted at the appropriate young people and families, are proportionate and outcome focused, and provide value for money
- Ongoing work to explore the development of commissioned and cost effective services in Moray; this will be to ensure that there is a broad range of services in Moray and for these to be commissioned where this offers best value for money
- Ongoing work to explore opportunities with commissioned services to meet the needs of neuro-divergent young people
- The Children Services Plan 2023-26 has a priority of supporting children and families who experience challenges due to disability and neurodiversity. This supports the planning in relation to SDS.

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Corporate Plan 2024 makes a commitment to improving outcomes for Moray's most vulnerable young people and families and that more children will live with their families, being cared for in strong safe, communities across Moray.

The work of Children's Services is sighted on and committed to upholding the principles of keeping The Promise and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Incorporation Bill. It is seeking to develop its role in line with The Promise and the importance of children's rights particularly in regards to having a good childhood and to hear the voice of children, young people and their families. There are no contraventions of child's rights to consider as part of this report.

(b) Policy and Legal

The legislative framework for SDS is the Social Care (SDS) (Scotland) Act 2013. It is also supported by the SDS Framework of Standards introduced in March 2021. The statutory guidance was updated in October 2022 to encompass the Framework of Standards. Other legislation includes the SDS (Direct Payments) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 and Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.

(c) Financial Implications

In 2022/23 there was additional spend of £106,020.20 in relation to SDS.

(d) Risk Implications

There is a risk that, given the increase in needs, the spend required continues to increase year on year with no allowance for this. The identified mitigations are outlined in paragraph 3.17.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio-Economic Impact

There are no equalities/socio-economic implications associated with this report.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impact

None.

(i) Directions

None.

(j) Consultations

Chief Social Work Officer/Head of Service, Panel Advisor, Chief Officer Health and Social Care, Equal Opportunities Officer, Senior Human Resources Advisor, Chief Financial Officer, Legal Services Manager and Caroline O'Connor, Committee Services Officer.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The purpose of this report is to request that Committee consider and note the review of spend for SDS in Children's Services.

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