



BAIRNS HOOSE PATHFINDER PROGRAMME

Report by Head of Children's Services/ Chief Social Work Officer

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to update Members on the outcome of the application for the Outer Hebrides to become a Bairns Hoose Pathfinder and to seek approval for progressing with the plan for the ground floor of St Lennans to become our Bairns Hoose.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Outer Hebrides was one of six partnerships across Scotland who were successful in their application to be a Bairns Hoose Pathfinder. This not only brings with it a need for systems change in terms of how we respond to the needs of the most vulnerable children in our community but we also need to identify a suitable environment/building to deliver these trauma informed interventions from.
- 2.2 Within the original applications to become a Pathfinder, we highlighted two possible location options for our Bairns Hoose. The first was the Old House, a resource previously used to support young, homeless adults with the second options being St Lennans. The cost of renovating the Old House to a standard that would meet the requirements of a Bairns Hoose would significantly exceed the budget the Comhairle would receive from the Scottish Government. The second option, St Lennans seems more affordable and realistic, with the added value of having the Children and Families Social Work Team being co-located in the same building.
- 2.2 The Chief Officers Group for Public Protection (COG) will oversee developments surrounding the Bairns Hoose with a Bairns Hoose Implementation Group reporting to the COG on progress with actions associated with project development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle:
 - (a) note the progress made and the intention to use the ground floor of St Lennans as the Outer Hebrides Bairns Hoose; and
 - (b) note the works ongoing to relocate the services currently delivered from the ground floor of St Lennans.

Contact Officer: Jack Libby, Head of Children's Services/ Chief Social Work Officer
Appendix: Proposed Floor Plan
Background Papers:

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	SG have awarded the Outer Hebrides £187,997.00 for 2023/24. The breakdown of the grant is £140,500.00 capital and £47,497.00. We are yet to submit our bid for 24/25 but it will be in the region of 400k – 500k.
Legal	none
Staffing	Will recruit an additional Child Protection Coordinator to help support the development of the project and will recruit an agency social worker to back-fill for a social worker from within the Children and Families Team, who will be piloting an intake service for the Bairns Hoose.
Assets and Property	Details within body of the report. It will result in the Comhairle retaining the use of St Lennans.
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	none
Equalities	none
Corporate Strategy	Safeguarding the most vulnerable in the community.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	none

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Bairns' Hoose is a transformational, whole-system approach to delivering child protection, justice, and health support and services to child victims and witnesses of abuse and harm. The overall vision of a Bairns' Hoose in Scotland is that all children in Scotland who have been victims of or witnesses 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.
- 5.2 The key values through which this vision will be achieved are that:
- we are child-centred, trauma-informed and respect the rights and wellbeing of the child at all times;
 - we provide consistent and holistic support, which enables children to have their voice heard, access specialist services and recover from their experiences;
 - we aim to prevent children being retraumatised and to improve the experience of the justice process for children and families;
 - we demonstrate connectedness and national leadership to uphold children's rights to protection, support, participation and recovery;
- 5.3 A key element of Bairns' Hoose is provision of a child-friendly setting which supports an integrated approach as part of the team around the child. Bairns' Hoose – based on the Icelandic model 'Barnahus' (child's house) – will bring together services in a 'four rooms' approach with child protection, health, justice and recovery services available in one setting. A key aim of the model is to reduce the number of times children have to recount their experiences.
- 5.4 Instead of having to go to multiple services in multiple locations our ambition is that, where it is in the child's best interests, the therapeutic care, support and recovery services a child and their family need, and including in serious cases the pre-recording of evidence, will be available in one setting – at the Bairns' Hoose. The location, type of premises and layout are all important factors in ensuring children can access these services in a safe, welcoming and homely environment.

- 5.5 The principles underpinning the Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviews will be a fundamental aspect of our national Bairns' Hoose model, to ensure that interviews are conducted with a child's best interests as a primary consideration. This includes scope for an interview conducted at a Bairn's Hoose to be used as the evidence in chief of a child. The Outer Hebrides is the first of the 3 island authorities to have social workers and police officers trained in the new interview model (2 social workers and 2 police officers).
- 5.6 Local Bairns' Hoose provision will fall within the definition of a children's service and will therefore be an integral part of planning and delivery of services set out in our Children's Services Plan. In the context of Bairns' Hoose, children's services plans and the reports on these will consider the impact of local service provision in addressing the specific wellbeing needs of children in recovery from experiences of trauma, abuse and neglect.
- 5.7 This approach will ensure consistency in the experiences of children and their families, with flexibility for local delivery partners to adapt the model to suit local circumstances. This recognises that co-location of all relevant services may not always be feasible, whilst still retaining the Bairns' Hoose principles of a child-friendly setting and delivery of joined-up support as part of the team around the child. The Outer Hebrides model aims to have a police officer and a Health professional located within the same building as Children's Services Social Work.
- 5.8 In addition to the Old House and St Lennans, a number of other options have been explored, including residential properties on the open market, none of which are suitable.

DETAIL

- 6.1 Technical Services have visited St Lennans to undertake a feasibility study and cost necessary works. There are some minor alterations required to the upper floor with more substantial works required for the ground floor. This includes reinstating the stairway between the ground and first floor which was sealed off a number of years back. Once the cost is known, an application will be made to the Scottish Government for the necessary capital and revenue funding.
- 6.2 There are a number of activities currently taking place within the ground floor space of St Lennans which will require relocating. These include:
- LGBQ+ Group
Young Mums Group (meets once per week term time)
Young Carers Group (meets once per week term time)
- 6.3 Work is actively under way to relocate these services to another facility. It is possible that the relocation of these services will be temporary as when the Bairns Hoose is complete and up and running, due to the Outer Hebrides having a fairly unique delivery model resulting from our scale, we could integrate other services into the Bairns Hoose.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Bairns Hoose is a positive step forward in our journey to deliver services which are truly trauma informed. We require a property for our Bairns Hoose and whilst a number of options have been considered, the ground floor of St Lennans is judged to be an ideal location. Whilst this does impact on a small number of services for a small amount of time, it is an impact and alternative arrangement will have to be made for these services. We are confident that alternative arrangements can be identified, be it for the short term or longer term.