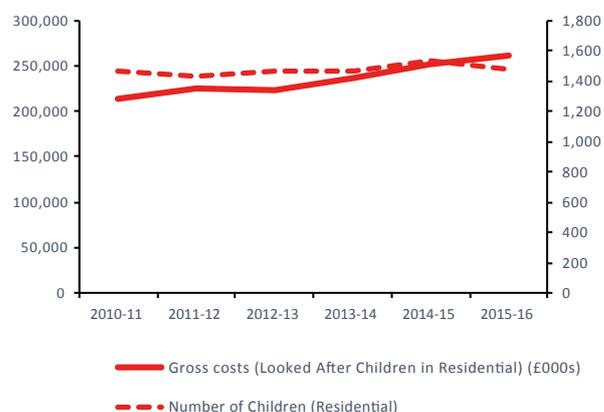
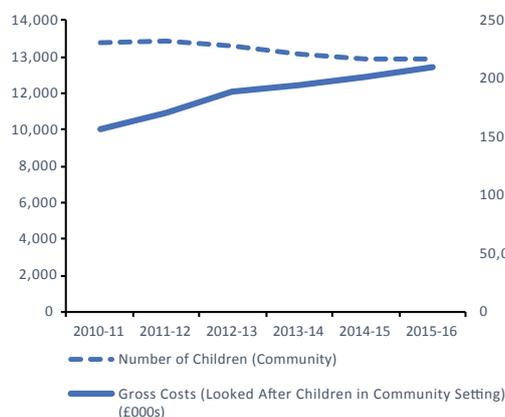
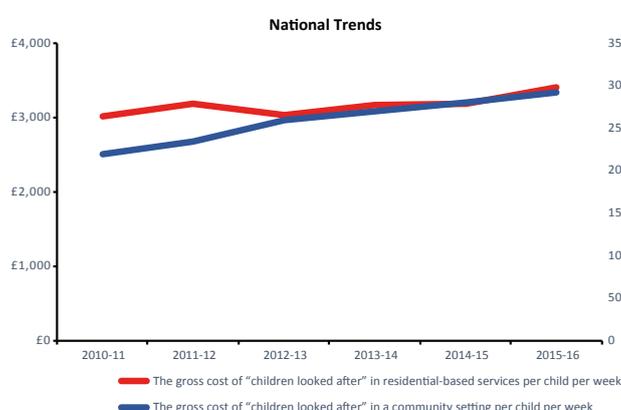


Looked After Children Briefing 2017

Councils corporate parenting role in relation to children who are looked after is a critical one. As a group, care leavers have some of the poorest outcomes in society and better information on the effectiveness of service delivery for care leavers and the outcomes experienced is essential in order to drive improvement.

The LGBF includes measures on the cost of looking after children in the community and in residential settings, and the balance of care between those looked after in the community and in residential settings.

At a national level, the cost per child looked after in both community and residential settings has increased since 2010/11. This reflects increasing gross expenditure on both, while the total number of children being looked after has reduced. The number of children looked after in the community has reduced significantly, while the number looked after in a residential setting has remained largely unchanged.

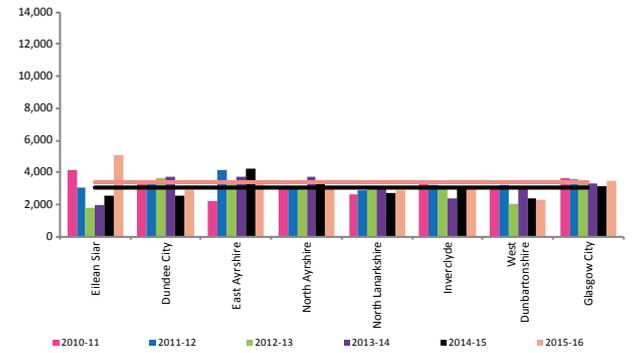
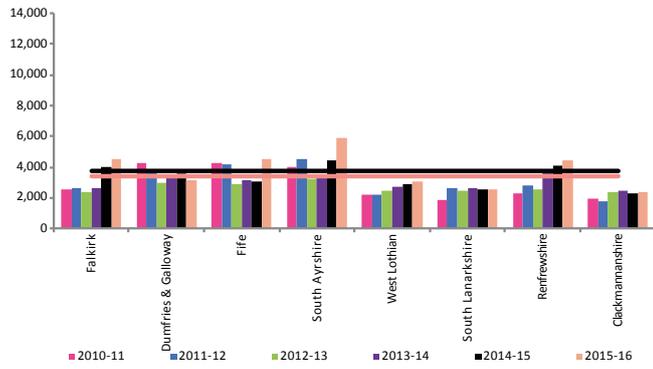
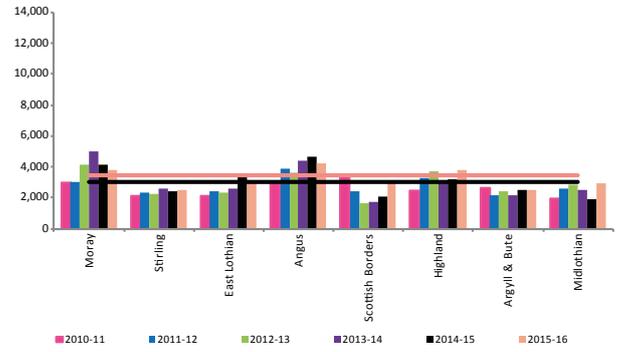
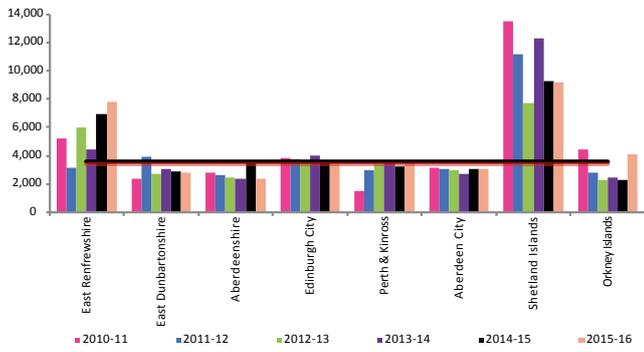


This increase in costs should be considered against the balance achieved between residential and community based care. The proportion (%) of all children who are in the care of their local authority who are being looked after in a community rather than a residential setting has remained around 90-91% since 2010/11. This has increased slightly in the past 12 months due to the proportionately larger reduction in the number of children in residential care in this period.

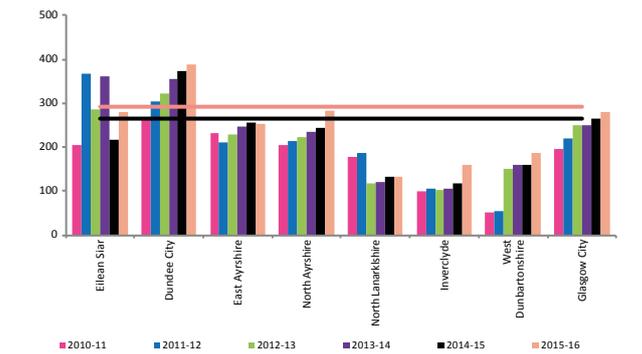
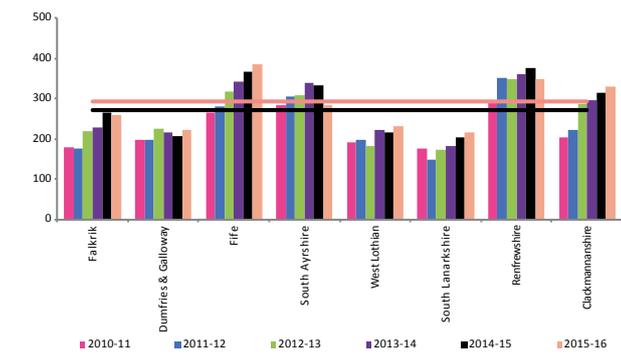
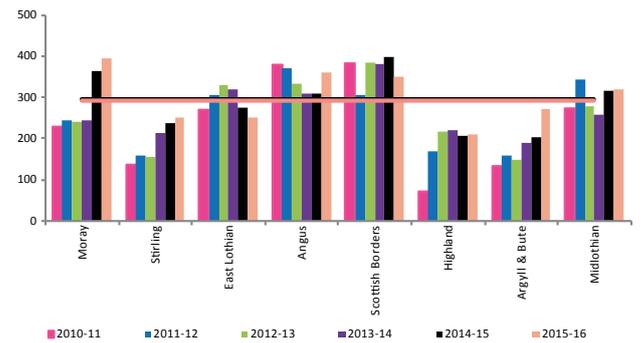
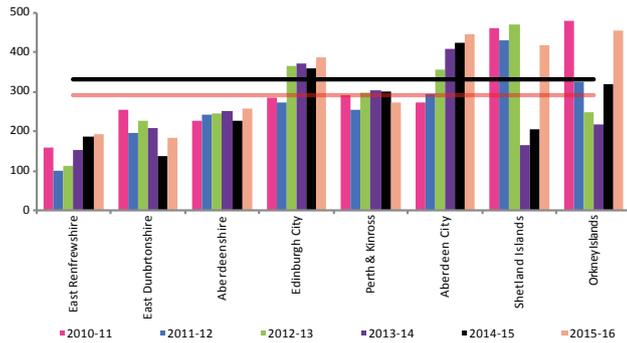
Variation

Both costs per place and the overall balance of care vary between councils. Costs range from around £2000 - £9000 per child looked after in a residential setting, and £130 to £450 in a community setting. The balance of care ranges from 71% to 95%. Variation is presented below by Family Group (grouped by level of deprivation). Family Groups with higher levels of deprivation tend to have slightly lower costs per child, particularly in a community setting, and a higher balance of children cared for in the community.

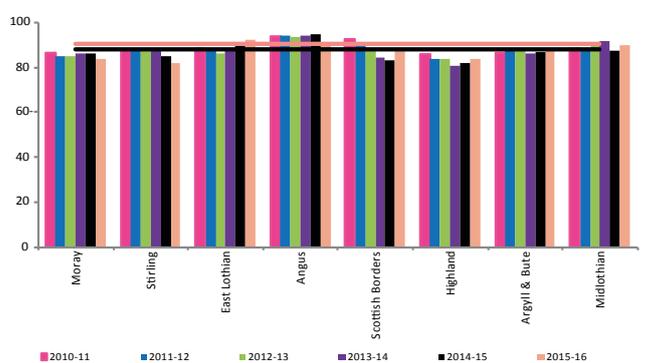
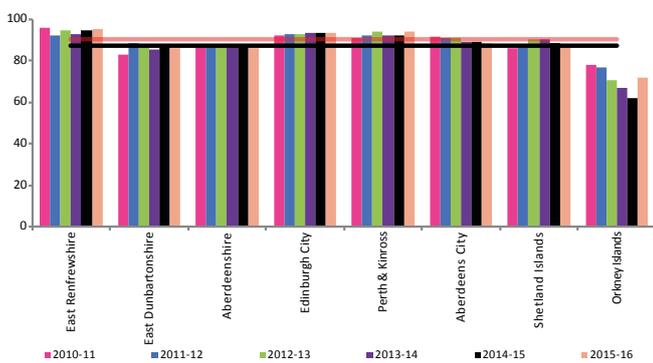
Cost per child in a residential setting – variation by Family Group

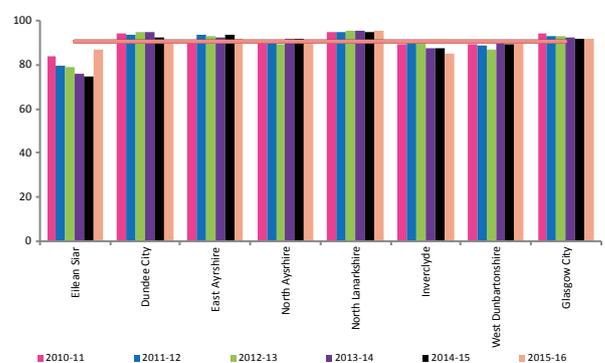
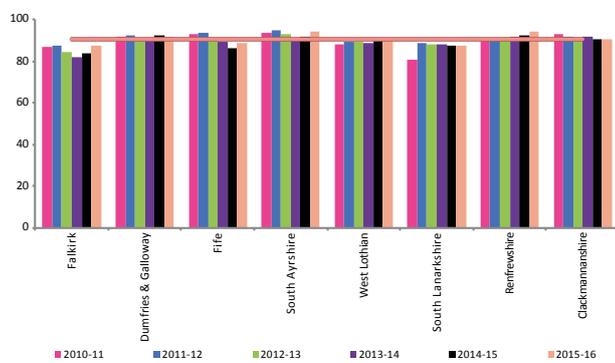


Cost per child in a community setting – variation by Family Group



Balance of Care - % of all LAC who are looked after in a community setting





Sharing Practice—April 2017 Benchmarking Event

Looked After Children services across Local Government face a number of common challenges. These include significant capacity issues in relation to fostering provision, demonstrating real progress in delivering the desired shift to prevention, and responding to new Continuing Care requirements.

The national capacity challenge facing fostering provision requires a strategic and unified approach. COSLA may have an important role to play here. For example, consideration is needed in relation to the future role of fostering:

- How important is fostering for the future of family based care, or is it now only element of a wider range of options?
- Would there be benefits in ‘professionalising’ foster provision and recruit at same rates as residential care workers?
- Do those authorities who offer highest allowances have better success (Scottish Government Foster Care allowances working group is exploring potential legislation around this).
- Should there be a national agreement to limit competition in recruitment activity across area boundaries?
- Is there potential learning from international approaches, such as Oregon in the US. The state of Oregon is using a light touch assessment process but provides intensive support after approval. Could this be the way forward for Scottish councils?
- How to tap into private sector capacity reflecting the sense that private agencies have a significant number of carers that are not active, while the public sector has a shortage of carers.

Greater focus is required on **building capacity for preventative work**, for example engaging with universal services and more effectively with partners. There also needs to be a greater emphasis on spend to save, encouraging creative solutions and underlining the cost and outcome benefits of holding young people safely in the community rather than in residential accommodation (‘spend to save’).

Lastly, the new ‘**Continuing care**’ requirements will have a significant impact on the already stretched capacity for looked after children, both for fostering and residential provision.

Commissioning

What and how provision is commissioned for looked after children has a significant effect on costs and capacity in each council. For example, **Perth & Kinross, Angus and Dundee** have reduced reliance on external purchase of placements via collaboration between the three authorities to share placements and vacancy management. They now pay £150 extra per week instead of a £600 management fee for external provider. This has been given a big drive from Chief Executives via their commissioning strategy. Important learning from this approach is that while there will be challenges in short term (e.g. situations where the collaboration means a shortage in local placements) the key is to focus on the longer-term benefits delivered. **East and Mid Lothian** are also exploring collaboration, as are **Falkirk and West Lothian**.

Alternatively, **Stirling** plan to reduce expenditure by assessing a baseline for all of their spending and exploring options around cheaper service providers or moving towards more in-house provision. **Dundee** also deliver the vast majority of services in-house and are exploring ways to work with the third sector. **West Lothian** provide 85% of their provision internally, with only 15% delivered via external provision. **East Renfrewshire** are taking a similar approach, but are focusing more on a multi-agency strategy to identify opportunities to collaborate.

Falkirk’s commissioning strategy is exploring a different direction. Previously, they had no internal provision and were biggest users of Care Vision. They are now trying to build capacity via commissioning external providers to provide their internal resource which has been assessed locally as a more practical option than building capacity internally.

Fostering

The future role of fostering provision is a key focus for the sector, due to reducing capacity. Some councils, for example **Angus**, have redesigned their recruitment approach to improve the conversion rate from enquiry to appointment and in the face of increasing external placements, and **Edinburgh** commissioned a fostering advert during 'X-factor' to maximise reach. Evidence is not yet available on the cost/benefit impact of these approaches. A number of councils (for example **Argyll & Bute, North Ayrshire and Perth**) are looking at how to professionalise foster care in order to provide the same benefits as a paid employee. This is considered an important option to explore in order to be able to compete with larger authorities/private sector, but further evaluation is needed to see if this is an effective/resilient working model. Many councils, **Dundee, Fife and Perth** as an example, are also focusing on preventative work- i.e. providing support to at risk families to reduce the need for foster care at a later date. **Perth & Kinross** are reviewing their model of foster care due concern they have reached 'saturation point'. They are working to improve the intelligence available on local carers, e.g. how many carers within a local area are actually approved and what are the key gaps such as provision for 8-12 year olds. They are also exploring the option of potentially removing the residential service completely, and using primaries schools with nurseries attached.

Continuing care

East Renfrewshire's biggest cost is continuing care, so are focussed on the development of new 'exit strategies'. **Argyll & Bute** are developing a Core and Cluster model, which would provide a satellite flat for the young person entering continuing care to promote independence. It is not yet known what the take up of this will be and whether young people may prefer to continue to live in their current placement.

Prevention and support in the community

Focus is growing across Scotland on building capacity for preventative work for Looked After Children. **Fife** have seen a £3million investment to increase preventative capacity with the aim of reducing purchased placements and delivering an equivalent level of support for LAC at home as those in a foster or residential setting. This has involved an emergency response team (Includem, Barnardos, MST) to provide crisis support, 50 new social workers (from 70 up to 120) and parenting support provision (linked to early years – targeted support for vulnerable families designed around universal services – more holistic/ wraparound).

Argyll & Bute are placing a greater focus upstream via increasing community work, increasing kinship, and increasing wraparound children's service workers. Additionally, they have restructured their staffing, and bank staff from children's houses are now used to carry out prevention work as they have the experience and it means no additional recruitment. The key driver for this change is emphasising cost of placements (e.g. £5800) and securing investment for young people/families in the community via a range of varied and creative support that can be offered for a fraction of this cost to keep children in their home (including activities for the family e.g. cinema/takeaways to build relationships; paying employers a stipend to offer a job to the young person). The buy in from councillors to 'do things differently' to make the resources you have go further for those who need them is crucial. The investment in working differently over the last 18 months to support people in the community has delivered results, with a number of young people who are being supported in the community who would otherwise be in secure/residential.

Stirling and **Perth & Kinross** are also developing strategies to shift the balance away from residential care, and to greater support for families and kinship carers in the home.



Useful Links

Presentation: [Fife Children and Families Strategy](#)

Presentation: [Angus & Perth: Working Together for Looked After Children Services](#)

Presentation: [Angus: Recruitment of Foster Carers](#)

Explore the LGBF data by service, across councils and over time using the [My Local Council Tool](#)



Case Studies

- [Falkirk Kinship Care](#)
- [Argyll & Bute Using bank staff for prevention work](#)
- [Angus & Perth Joint Working](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Reducing Emergency Placements](#)

- [Glasgow Standard Operating Model with SCRA](#)
- [Inverclyde Improving attainment for LAC](#)
- [North Ayrshire Preparing for Positive Destinations](#)
- [North Lanarkshire SDS Coaching](#)
- [Shetland Achieving Permanence](#)

For further information about the Local Government Benchmarking Framework, please visit www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking or email jacqueline.greenlees@improvementservice.org.uk.
