

The 'Home to Highland' Programme vision is to return care experienced young people to the Highlands from Out of Area (OOA) residential placements, if that is agreed to be the optimum decision for them.

A combination of new services and the creative use of existing provisions are enabling children to remain in the communities they know, which in turn reduces the need for additional out of area placements. Since 2018, well over 100 children have returned to Highland or been able to remain in area with demonstrably improved educational and emotional wellbeing outcomes. The programme has avoided costs of over £13 million pounds, as compared with the children remaining OOA for a year. The money that would have been spent on these placements has been invested in the development of services in the Highland area.

Following the Home to Highland programme achieving a bronze Cosla Excellence Award for Achieving Better Outcomes, the expanded business case proposed a number of ambitious targets: to increase the number of children placed in foster care or with family alternatives, reduce spot-purchased placements by x15 each year, retain more young people in the Highland area and reduce spend on external placements thereby ensuring funding is available for a larger number of care experienced young people. The programme has exceeded these aims each year.

The expanded programme was launched through a series of briefings and workshops across Children's Services, with external stakeholders and 3rd sector organisations (the Police, Who Cares? and the NHS). Project ideas and new services came from extensive consultations with staff, Managers and Care Experienced Young People based on driver diagram improvement methodologies. A Communication Strategy was developed to ensure all stakeholders were kept abreast of actions, with a Programme Board governing. This work has also been presented at national level through the Scottish Government's Young Peoples Improvement Collaborative.