Delivering The Promise:

Confronting the Challenges in Scotland’s Care System and shaping Scotland Excel’s response

Speaker introductions

James Mackenzie
Scotland Excel

Andrew Rome
Revolution Consulting

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Session overview

Session 1 - James

- The Promise – aspirations, risks and issues;
- Key challenges to *#KeepThePromise*

Session 2 - Andrew

- Can buying together revolutionise market shaping in children's social care?

Summary

- Learning for Scotland

Coffee break

Q&A session

Feedback and discussion:

- Scotland Excel's positioning for the future

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So, what is “*The Promise*”?

Independent Care Review

“Scotland would come together and love its most vulnerable children to give them the childhood they deserve.”

The Promise

“We grow up loved, safe, and respected so that we realise our full potential.”

10-year plan

“Scotland needs its route map to be dynamic and able to flex and change as the world changes, making sure the focus stays on doing what is needed to make the changes demanded.”

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The Promise – key highlights

*"When reading **The Promise**, do not look for the place, role and purpose of the current features of the 'care system.'*

*Whilst certain aspects of the current structures are referenced, **The Promise** sets out an overall view of what the new approach should be."*

#KeepthePromise – The Plans

Plan One

"There will be in-built obsolescence of those services operating at the crisis end of delivery."

Plan 21-24

Five priority areas:

- A good childhood
- Whole family support
- Supporting the workforce
- Planning
- Building capacity

Plan 24-30

2025 – Halfway mark.

Developing sense of urgency.

- Consultation.
- Legislation.
- System challenge.

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Halfway, but not halfway

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the oversight board
for the promise

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Monitoring if Scotland's promise to care experienced children and young people is being kept.

In 2020, Scotland **made a promise** that children and young people would grow up loved, safe and respected. This would be done by implementing the conclusions of the Independent Care Review in full.

To monitor and track the progress of the promise, The Oversight Board was established in January 2021.

The Board publicly report on progress – highlighting what has happened – and on what else is needed for Scotland to keep the promise by 2030.

Latest Report

Oversight Board Report THREE

Report THREE launched on Wednesday 5 February— exactly five years since the promise was made in The Scottish Parliament.

Download Report THREE.

"2025 marks the halfway point to 2030, but Scotland is not halfway to keeping The Promise"

Halfway, but not halfway

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Nicola Sturgeon, who made the Promise in 2020, met with care-experienced young people in her last months in office | Alamy

'Promise' to children in care at risk of not being kept

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The "Promise" to improve the lives of children and young people in care is not on track to be met, a report from the oversight board has concluded.

Progress on meeting the Promise has been delayed by "unexpected events" and "systemic barriers", meaning that five years into its 10-year timeline, it is "not halfway to being kept".

The board said it was "still possible" to meet the overarching 2030 target of ensuring care-experienced children grow up loved, safe and respected.

The Herald

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Scotland behind schedule in promises made to children in c

5TH FEBRUARY | CARE | CHILDREN IN SCOTLAND | NATIONAL GOVERNMENT | POLITICS

By Paul Cargill

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Scotland remains behind schedule in their promise to children in care *(Image: Getty)*

The fulfilment of a national promise made to care-experienced children in Scotland to keep them safe growing up has been delayed due to a mix of unexpected events and "systemic barriers", a a group of experts has found.

In a report published this week, the Oversight Board said issues impacting Scotland's workforce and providing whole family support has meant the Scottish Government's Promise is not even halfway to being kept.

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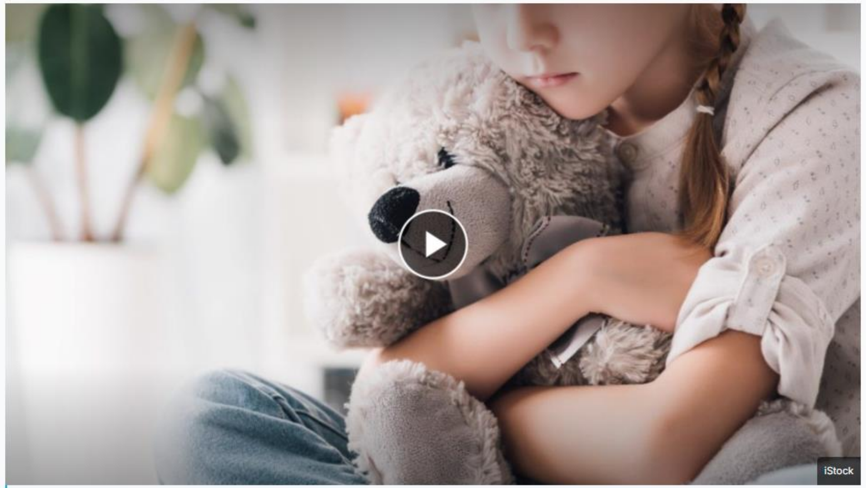
Insight
Ewan Petrie
5th Feb 2025

It's been five years since The Promise - but journey is behind schedule

A third report from the Oversight Board has accused ministers of taking too long to produce a delivery plan.



The Promise: There has been tangible progress, but the journey to the 2030 target is behind schedule.

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Five years ago you could feel a real sense of optimism in the room at the launch of The Promise.

There was a feeling this time things would change for the better for those with direct experience of care.

Five core challenges

Changing demands and requirements

Social Work Scotland Statistics

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Table 2.2 Number of looked after children by placement type, 2020-2024

Placement type category	Placement type subcategory	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2024 Percentage of total
In the community	At home with parents	3,563	2,853	2,584	2,435	2,313	20%
In the community	Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	4,456	4,410	4,226	4,148	4,099	35%
In the community	Foster Carers	4,744	4,446	4,115	3,890	3,683	31%
In the community	Prospective adopters	185	140	156	139	159	1%
In the community	In other community	74	84	104	186	264	2%
In the community	**Total**	**13,022**	**11,933**	**11,185**	**10,798**	**10,518**	**89%**
Residential accommodation	Local authority home	556	516	547	564	533	5%
Residential accommodation	Voluntary home	130	94	80	68	75	1%
Residential accommodation	Residential school	329	319	311	302	305	3%
Residential accommodation	Secure accommodation	59	38	47	47	46	0%
Residential accommodation	In other residential	362	300	277	304	365	3%
Residential accommodation	**Total**	**1,436**	**1,267**	**1,262**	**1,285**	**1,324**	**11%**
All	**Total looked after children**	**14,458**	**13,200**	**12,447**	**12,084**	**11,842**	**100%**

The Cost and Complexity of Care

The Cost of Care, 2023-24

Gross expenditure:

Children & Families social work services

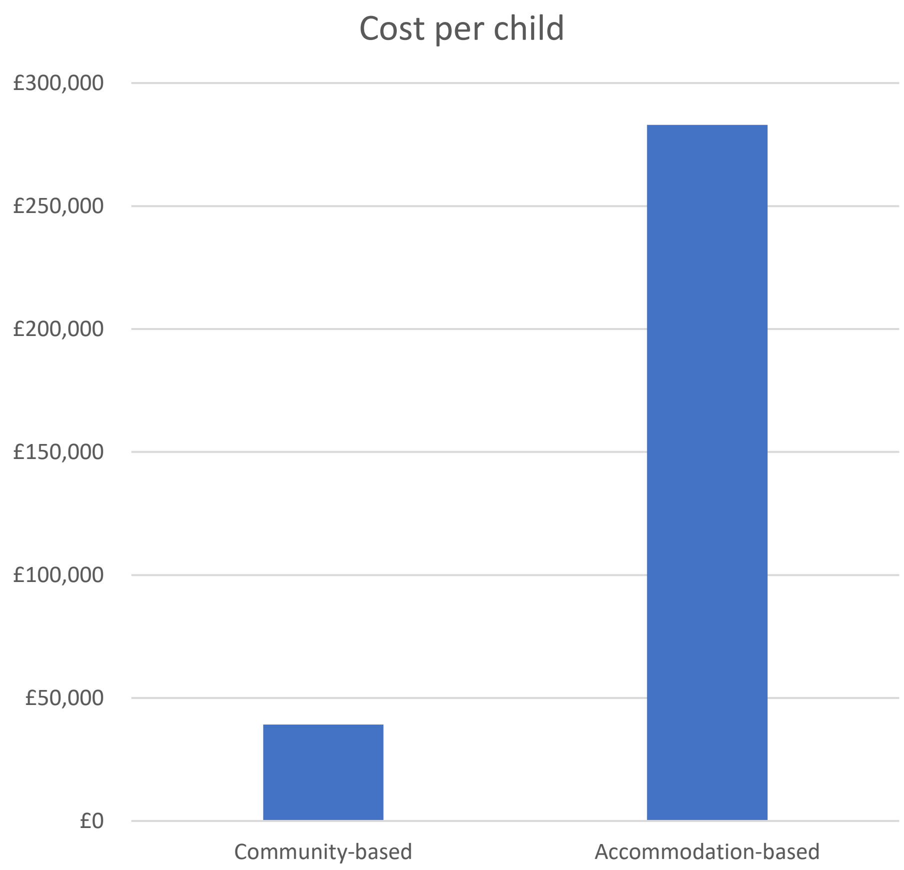
£1,190,959,000

36% on community-based services

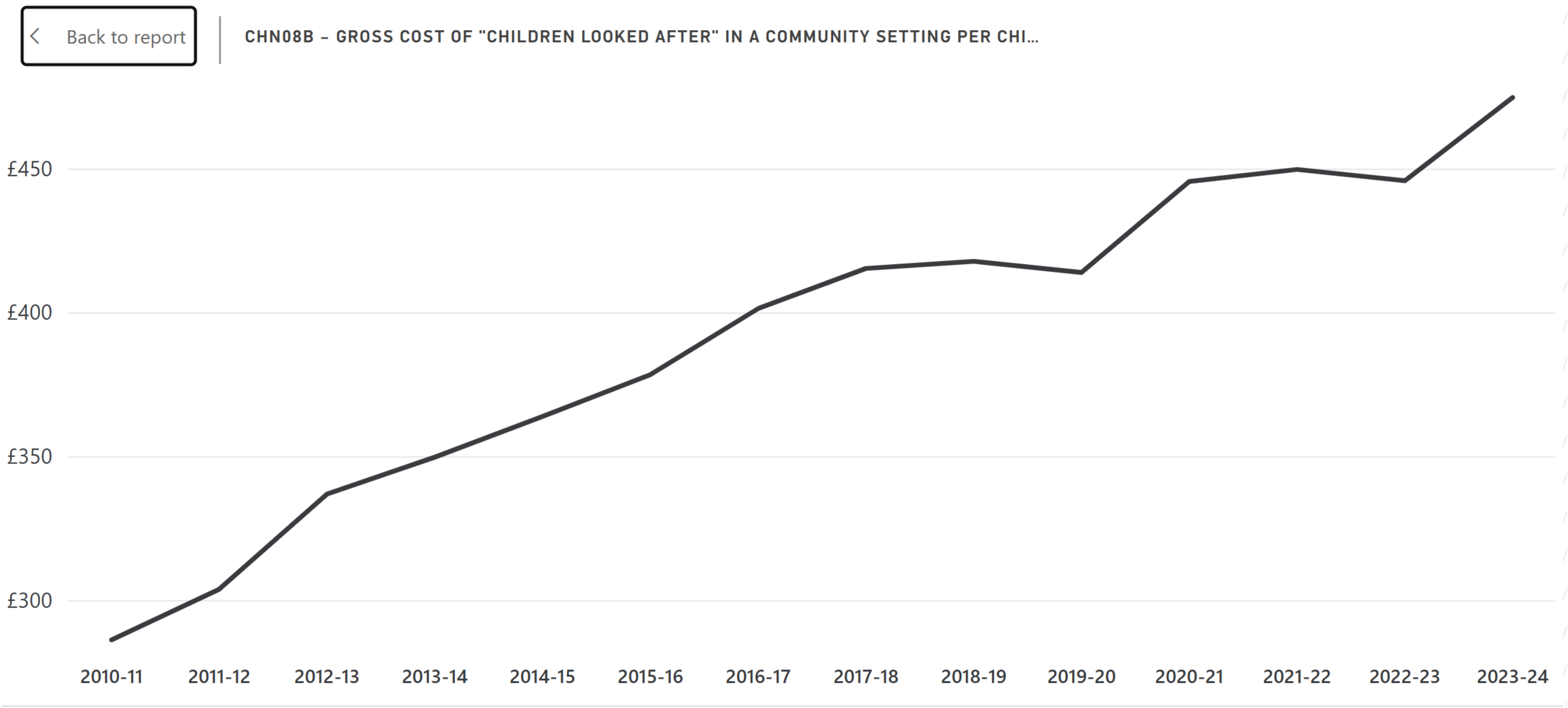
~10,798 children

31% spent on accommodation-based services

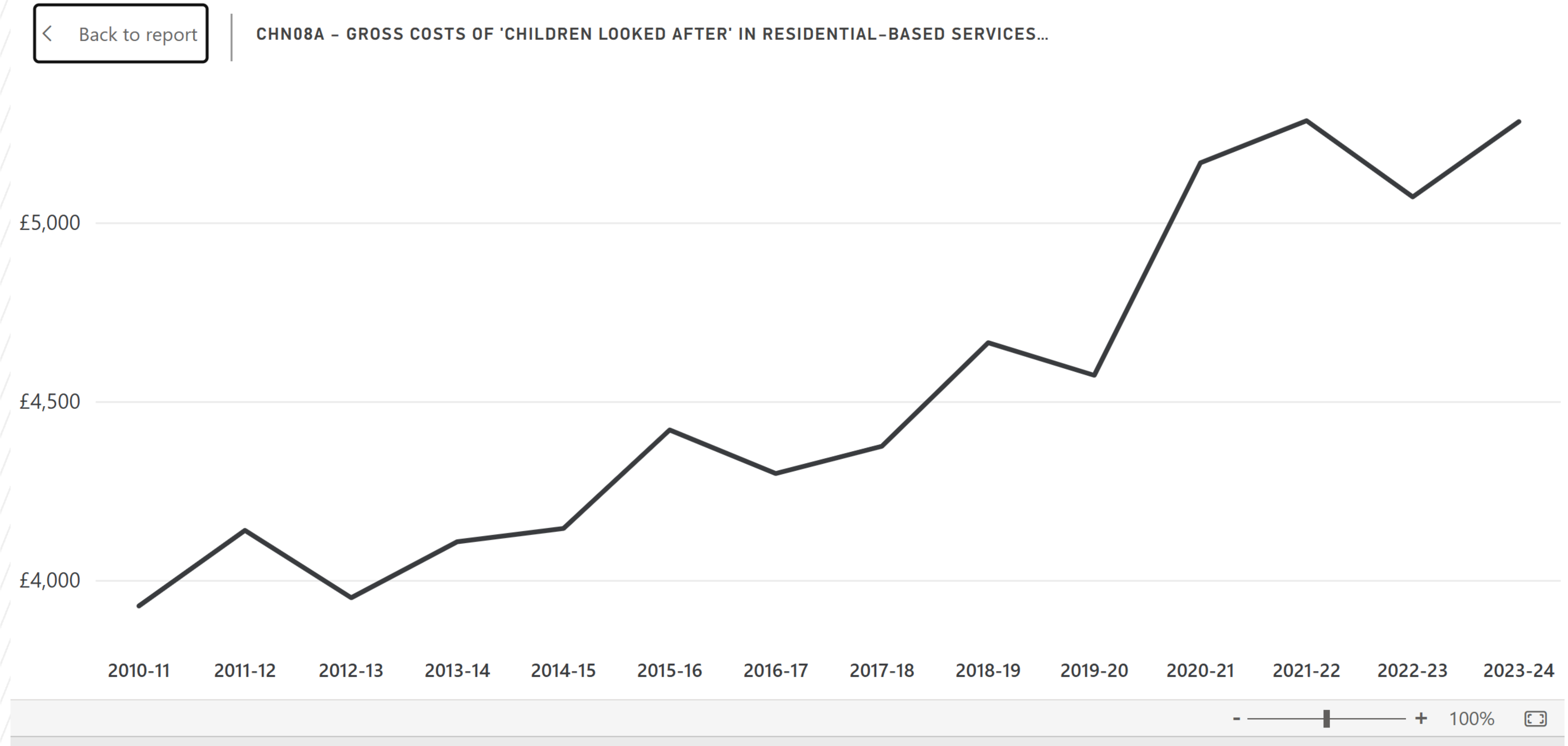
~1,285 children



Cost per child - community



Cost per child - residential



Profit and loss

Profit and the cost of care

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The Sunday Post

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NEWS / SCOTTISH NEWS

£28,000 a child: Profit of p[…] questioned as the cost of ca[…]

By Marion Scott June 19, 2022, 2:03 pm

Special schools can charge between £5-7,000 per child per week

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Liberal Democrats urge government to cap […]
profits of private companies providing SEN[…]

31st July 2025, 10:30pm

Ramsay Hodgson

Private companies providing education for pupil[…]
educational needs and disabilities (SEND) shoul[…]
capped, the Liberal Democrats have said after fi[…]

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Balnacraig School: Liquidation for one of Scotland's oldest charities

21st October 2021

CHARITY | COMMUNITY | ECONOMY | EDUCATION | SCOTLAND

By Martin Williams
Senior News Reporter
@Martin1Williams

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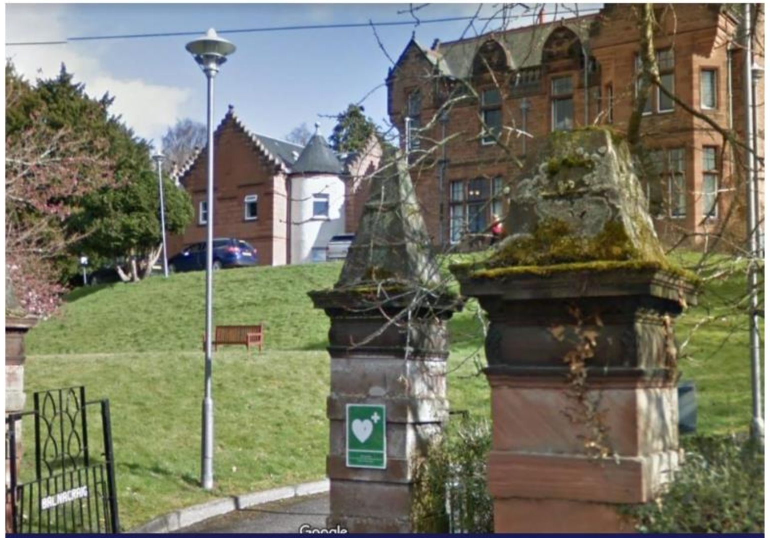

'Great sadness': Liquidation for one of Scotland's oldest charities supporting vulnerable children

ONE OF Scotland's oldest charities that that has provided vital care for vulnerable children and young people for nearly 180 years has appointed a liquidator.

Balnacraig School has been operating in Perth since 1843 and has cared for close to 2000 young people from across Scotland.

Secure care

Secure care capacity

Vacancies For Independent Secure Centres

Centre	Gender	Capacity	Number of beds vacant	Emergency beds vacant	Other beds vacant	Current Occupancy	Next Expected Vacancy
Good Shepherd Centre Secure Unit Bishopton	Male/Female	18	0	N/A	N/A	17	
Kibble Education and Care Centre Paisley	Male/Female	19	0	0	0	19	
Rossie Secure Accommodation Services Montrose	Male/Female	18	0	0	N/A	18	
St Mary's Kenmure Bishopbriggs	Male/Female	12	0	0	0	11	

National Contingency Resource(s)

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The Herald

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DANI GARAVELLI

Secure units at capacity: was the change in

3RD APRIL | SCOTLAND'S PRISONS: CRISIS BEHIND BARS | COURT | CRIME | POLITICS

By Dani Garavelli
Columnist/Interviewer of the Year

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William Lindsay and Katie Allan took their own lives (Im

When the final children were moved from Polm
Institution last August, those who worked in the
breathed a sigh of relief. It had long been ackno
place for under-18s who - regardless of their offe
more likely to be rehabilitated, in one of the cou

The Herald

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EXCLUSIVE

Secure accommodation units at risk amid capacity concern

2ND JUNE | HMP POLMONT | SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT | SECURE ACCOMMODATION | SOCIAL CARE | POLITICS

Exclusive by Rebecca McCurdy
Political Correspondent
@_RebeccaMcCurdy

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Under-18s were moved from young offenders' institutions and into secure accommodation. *(Image: Newsquest)*

Scotland's secure accommodation units for vulnerable under-18s is "grinding to a halt" amid serious capacity concerns, ministers have been warned.

There are just two beds available out of a total of 71 secure accommodation spots for children considered to be a "significant risk" to themselves or others in the community.

Capacity was already stretched, with the previous intake accommodating 78 young adults.

Get *involved* with the news

The Workforce

Recruitment and retention

Service type	Vacancy rate (% WTE)			% increase since 2020
	2020	2021	2022	
Secure accommodation service	2.50%	5.10%	10.00%	(+75%)
Care home service: children and young people	4.90%	7.90%	7.40%	(+34%)
School care accommodation service: Residential special school	3.90%	7.20%	7.20%	(+46%)
Support Service - Care at home*	7.70%	11.10%	12.20%	(+37%)
Support Service - Other than Care at home*	7.00%	8.60%	9.70%	(+28%)
Housing Support Service*	6.40%	9.80%	11.00%	(+42%)
Overall vacancy rate	**5.40%**	**8.28%**	**9.58%**	**(+44%)**

Note: Vacancy rates for Support Services categories 'Care at home', 'Other than Care at home', and 'Housing Support' refer to both children and adult services.

What the future holds

Not alone…

Costs and complexity in care

The real drivers of high-cost placements for children in care

Better value, delivered.

YPO Children's Social Care Discovery Project:

Securing good homes for children in care

PBO 'Futures Group' Report

Can buying together Revolutionise Market Shaping in Children's Social Care

Andrew Rome

Revolution Consulting

The Guardian
Newspaper of the year

Biggest independent children's care providers in England made £300m profit last year

Fee income for 20 largest operators - many private equity-owned - soars as councils struggle to meet costs

The number of children in care is at its highest level since before the pandemic, with 82,170 looked-after children in England. Photograph: Tricia de Courcy Ling/The Observer

The biggest independent providers of children's care in England made profits of more than £300m last year, as concern mounts over the conditions that some children are being placed in and the spiralling costs for councils.

Fee income for the 20 largest operators of independent children's care totalled £1.63bn last year, a 6.5% increase on the previous year. And 19% of that - £310m - was recorded as profit, according to an independent analysis. Half of the top 20 providers have some private equity or sovereign wealth fund ownership.

Council spending on independent children's care in England has more than doubled in six years. In 2021-22, spending on independently run residential care for vulnerable children increased by 11% on the previous year.

This comes with the number of children in care at its highest level since before the pandemic: 82,170 in England. There are also concerns among councils over the indebtedness of some of the main providers.

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

This document relates to the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill (SP Bill 74) as introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 17 June 2025

Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill

Competition & Markets Authority

Children's social care market study

Final report

Summary: Proposed changes to primary legislation – Eliminating profit from the care of children looked after

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive

Breaking down barriers to opportunity

November 2024

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

Competition & Markets Authority

Recommendations we are not taking forward: banning for profit care; capping prices or profits

Department for Education

Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive

Breaking down barriers to opportunity

November 2024

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

- RCCs: Plan and commission regionally
- Minimum requirements
  - Regional data
  - Regional sufficiency
  - Working as ONE CUSTOMER
  - Regional fostering recruitment
  - Develop new regional capacity
  - Leadership and governance
- We expect RCCs to gain economies of scale and harness the collective buying power of individual local authorities

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Looked After Children Expenditure 2023/24: Private and Voluntary

	£m
North East	244
North West	720
Yorkshire and The Humber	424
East Midlands	425
West Midlands	549
East of England	312
South East	754
South West	447
Inner London	295
Outer London	350
Total	4,520

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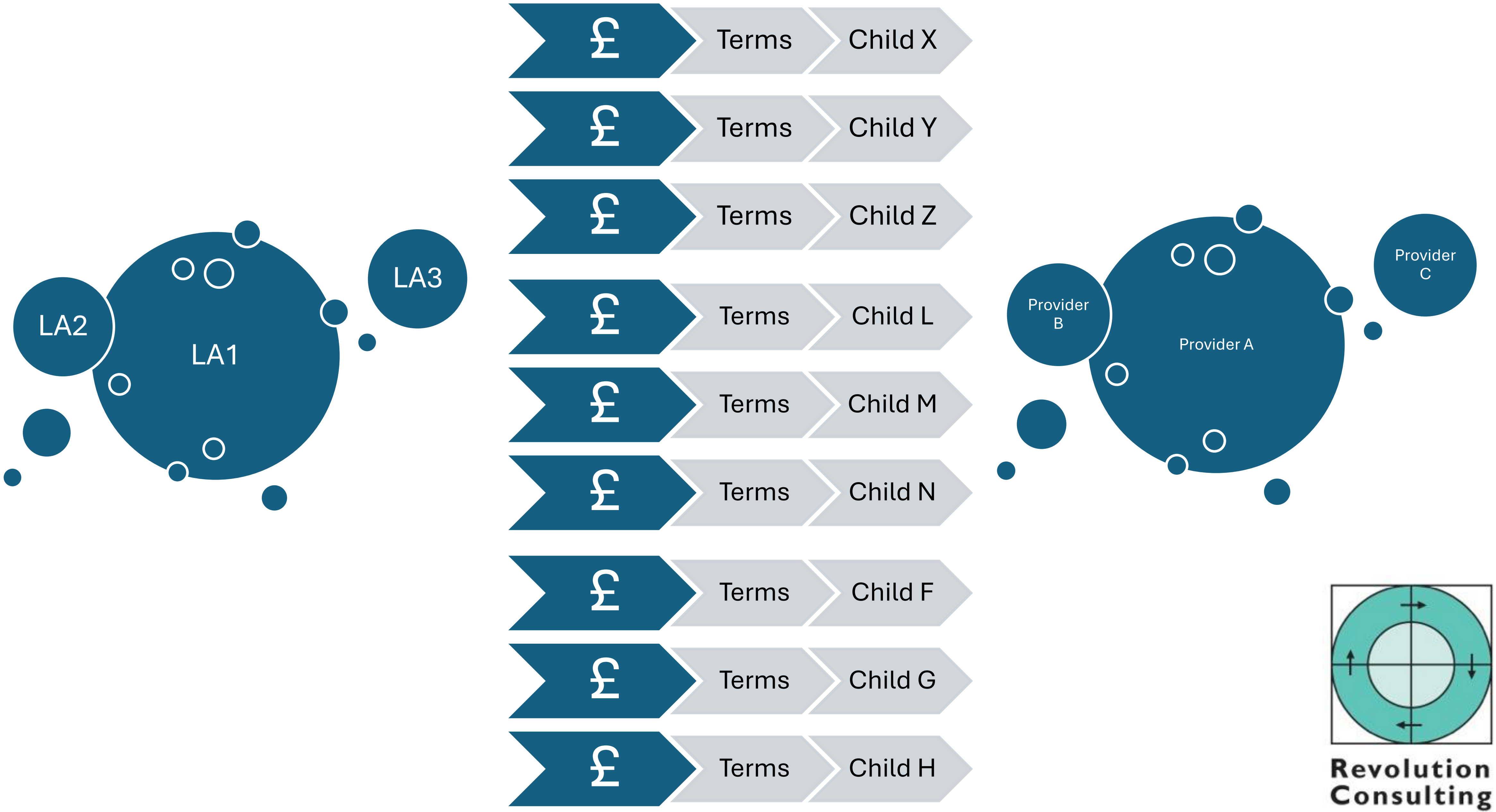

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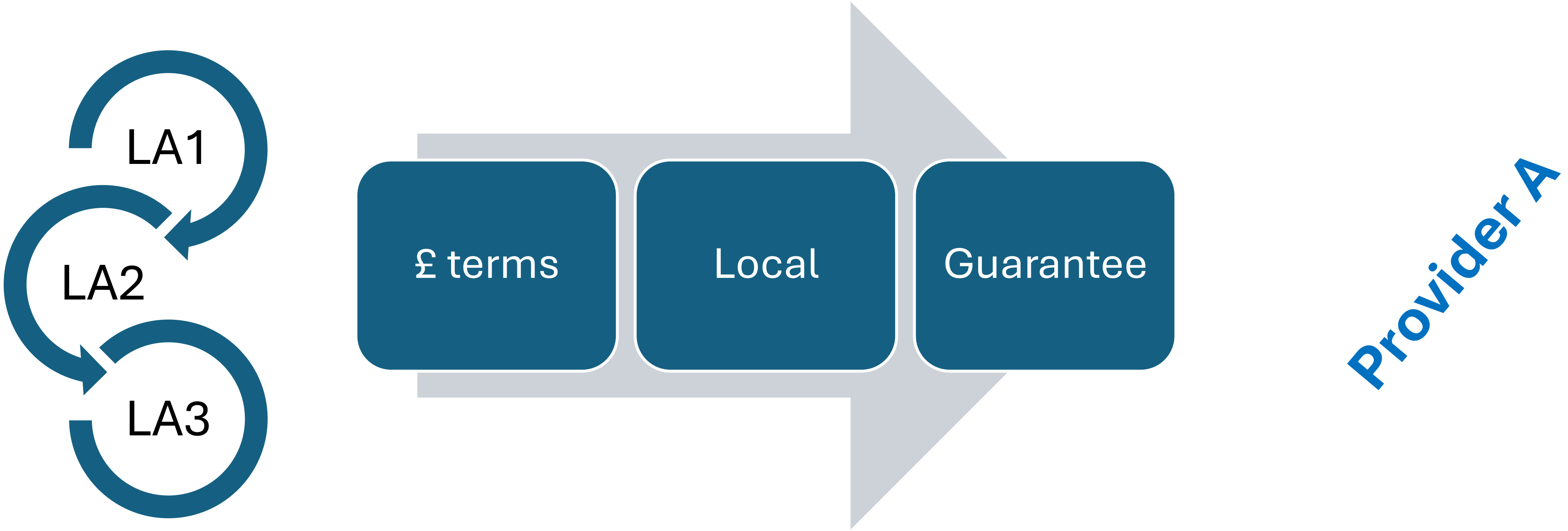

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Can we buy better together?

- Does aggregation of purchasing power work?
- Are providers comfortable in the spot markets?
- Will they respond to aggregated purchasing?
- Can a group of LAs coordinate their activity to make use of that power?
- Does a commercial focus risk overlooking needs and matching?

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Buying together programme

1. Spending analysis across a region
2. Design of alternative commercial structures to leverage regional spend and reflection into partnership arrangements between LAs
3. Engagement with commissioners and providers to test structures – codesign intent
4. Deal making and procurement
5. Resourcing: Monitoring and management

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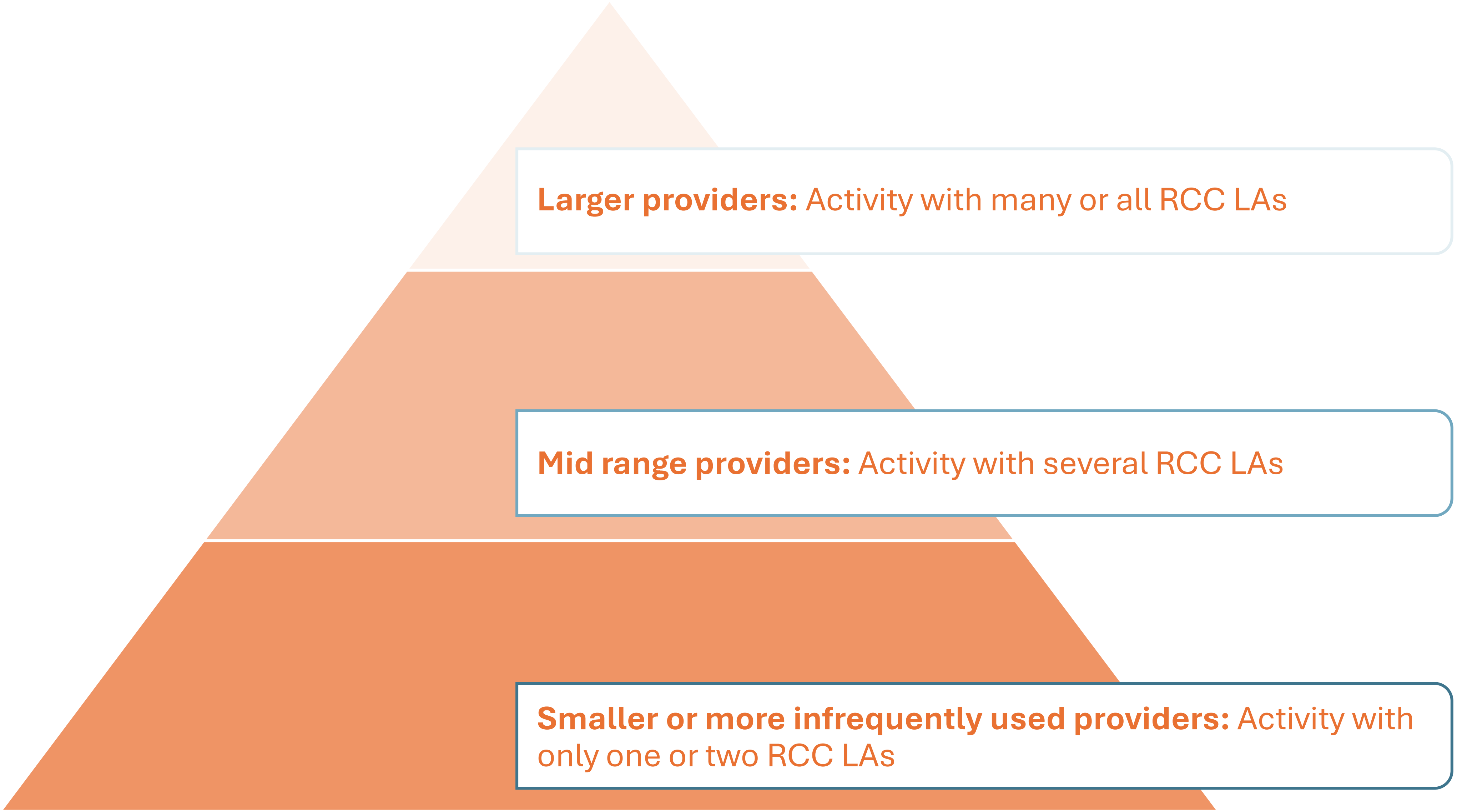

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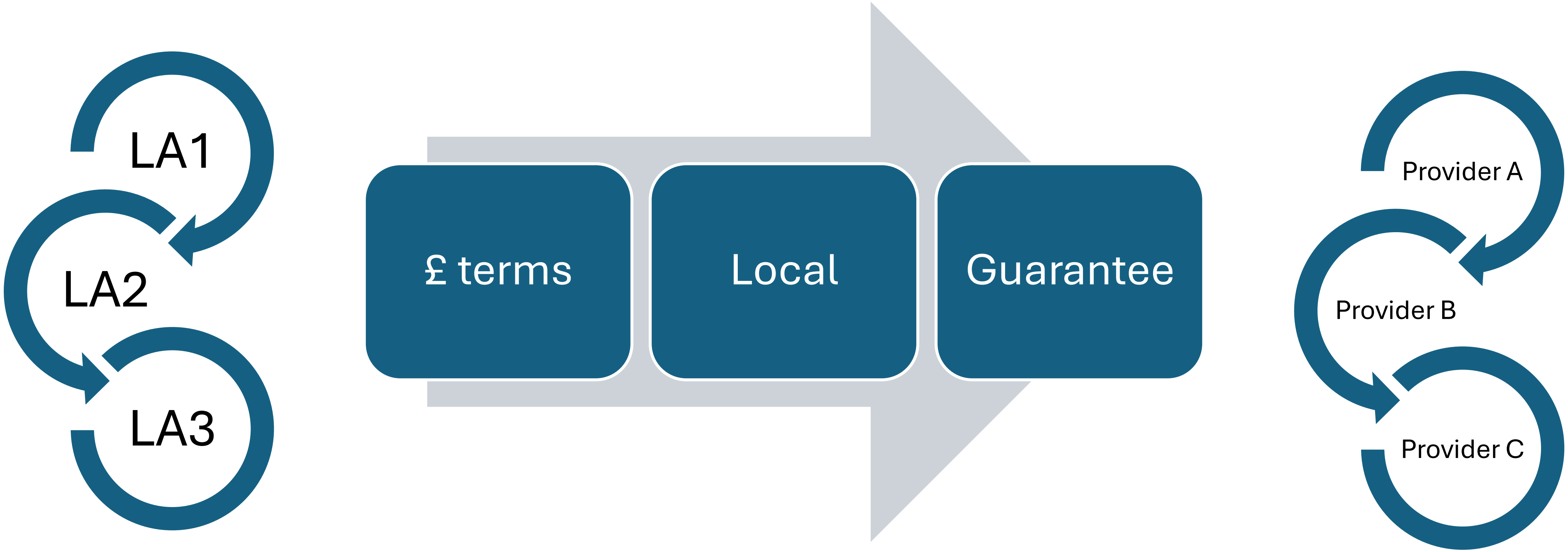

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Reflections on provider engagement

- Significant appetite to improve how providers and authorities work together – 100% positive response rate to 1-1 meetings.
- Written/documented offers based on "what makes most sense for you?"
- Solutions may need common elements and bespoke arrangements
- Variety of methods of moving the risk boundaries
- Preferred or exclusive local access
- Opportunity to deal with uplift dissonance
- Innovation trials
- Procurement: Existing vs new Procurement Act 2023 flexibilities.
- Relationships within these new arrangements are the key

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Widening the strategic approach

- When does a large block contract start to look more like a joint venture?
- Ownership options. LA ownership. Government capital. Invest with care!
- LAPF Investments (remember Ontario Teacher’s Pension Fund) Natural hedging.

LAPF Investments

Rachel Reeves targets Canada-style pension model for UK

Chancellor Rachel Reeves wants to use Canada’s pension fund model as a template for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

Reeves met with Canadian pension plans in Toronto on the 7th August with the aim of encouraging them to keep investing in the UK, as well as understanding how scale can help drive greater domestic investment.

In a statement ahead of the meeting, she said: “The size of Canadian pension schemes means they can invest far more in productive assets like vital infrastructure than ours do.

“I want British schemes to learn lessons from the Canadian model and fire up the UK economy, which would deliver better returns for savers and unlock billions of pounds of investment.

“We’re already beginning to see schemes announce plans to invest. That’s a vote of confidence in our work to fix the foundations of the economy, rebuild Britain and make every part of our country better off.”

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Learning for Scotland

Future positioning of Scotland Excel

Strategic Commissioning

Vision

To provide collaborative, innovative and transformative solutions that support social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

Adult Social Care	National Care Home Contract	Digital	Children and Families

Data, intelligence and commercial.

Tendering and contact administration.

Future of Social Care in Scotland Excel

Exit

Support for local commissioning

Refocussed version of current offering

Current offering

Active commissioning

Expansion

Thought provokers

Personal/ professional reflections

- Which challenges are most key to you in your role and area?
- What challenges from your context have we missed?
- What opportunities are there for procurement and commissioning in what you've heard?

National considerations

- What do you need from national partners to help?
- As we consider the future of social care, where should Scotland Excel position itself to be of greatest benefit?

Coffee break

Q&A Session

Feedback & Discussion

- Alternative approaches in Scotland (locally, regionally, nationally).
- Future of Social Care in Scotland Excel – how can we best support social care in the future?

Thank you

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Spot and Block are very different models: Is there anything in-between?

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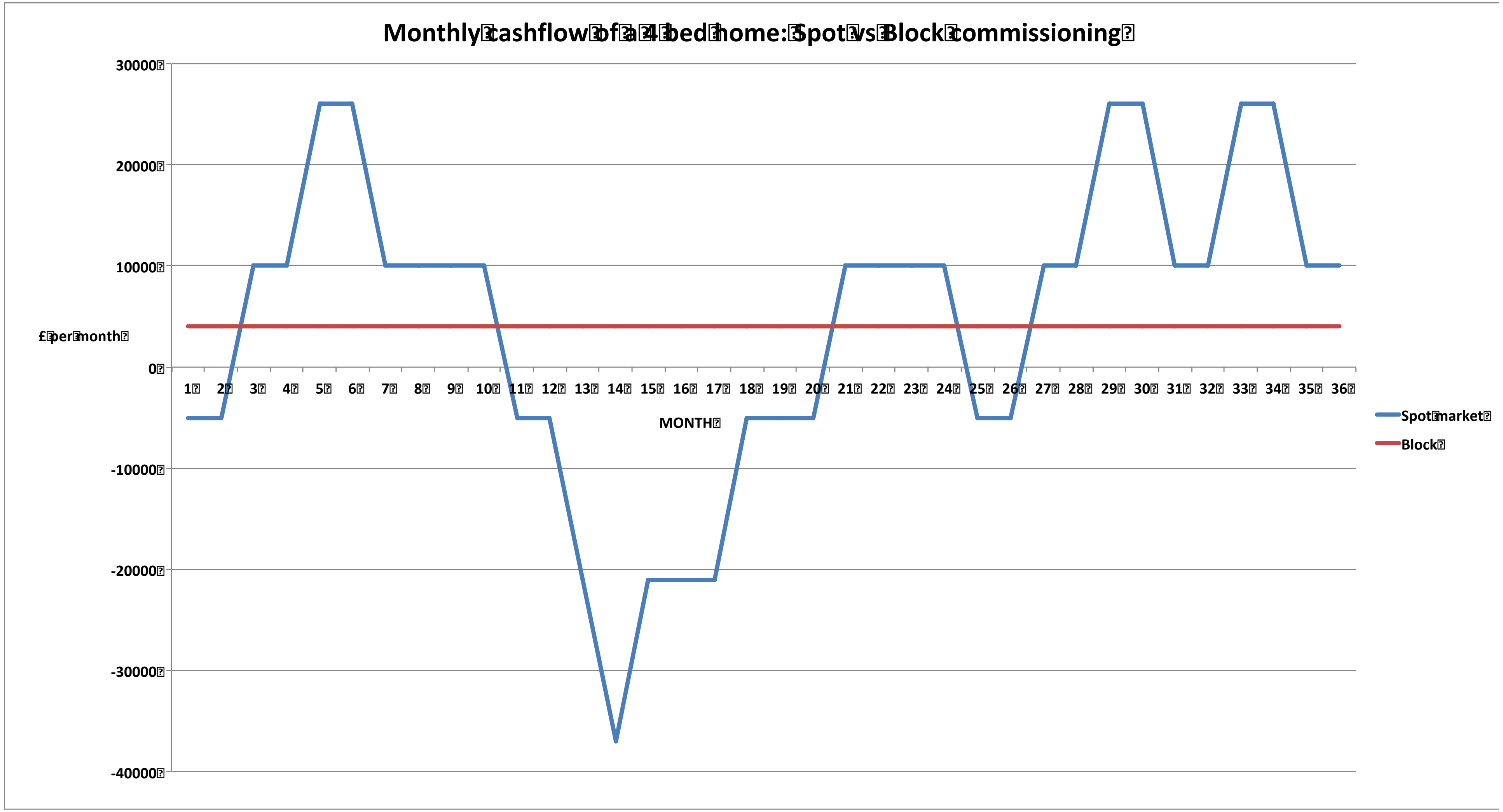

Local Authority Outcome