

Report of the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 10th January 2018

P

Subject:

Update of Elected Member Independent Monitoring and Quality Assurance of Children's Homes, Regulation 44 and Inspection Outcomes.

Summary statement:

The report aims to update on the number of Independent Monitoring visits of Children's Local Authority Residential Children's Homes completed with the additional support and scrutiny of Elected Members.

The report also aims to update with regards the overall outcomes of inspection judgements following completion of statutory inspections by Ofsted.

Jim Hopkinson
Deputy Director
(Children's Social Care)

Report Contact: Suzanne Lythgow
Quality Standard Manager
Phone: 07582 100 936
E-mail: suzanne.lythgow@bradford.gov.uk

Portfolio:

Children's Services

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report aims to highlight efforts to increase participation in Elected Members' visits to Local Authority (LA) residential and respite homes during April 2017 – December 2017.

2. BACKGROUND

- The report provides overview of Regulation 44 process
- The role of Elected Members within Regulation 44 process
- Update on the number of Elected Member Monitoring visits completed during April 2017 – December 2017 following the implementation of changes as recommended by Elected Members to promote increased participation in Independent Monitoring Visits (Regulation 44), in line with the Children's Homes Regulations, Quality Standards Guide and the inspection framework for Ofsted 2015.
- The report provides an update on inspection outcomes for 2017 – 2018 and an overview of the past four years inspection judgements demonstrating change.
- The report will reflect the changes implemented to promote participation by Elected Members in completing Independent Monitoring Visits (Regulation 44), in line with the Children's Homes Regulations, Quality Standards Guide and the inspection framework for Ofsted, which came into force on the 1st April 2015.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Independent monitoring of children's homes is a regulatory requirement which requires the Independent Person to visit each of the Local Authority's 10 children's homes at least once a month. The Children's Homes Regulations (CHR) 2015 set specific requirements for the independent monitoring and quality assurance of children's homes which includes;

- To interview in private; the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires;
- Inspect the premises of the home;
- Inspect the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.

- 3.2 The purpose of the independent monitoring is to offer oversight, scrutiny within the home and for the Independent Person to form an opinion as to whether;

- Children are effectively safeguarded
- The conduct of the home promotes children's wellbeing

- 3.3 The process of independent monitoring is to ensure there is a rigorous and robust approach which provides an overview of the running of the home. The report captures areas of good practice which demonstrates compliance with Children's Homes Regulations and Guide to Quality Standards. The independent person's report may identify areas for improvements and make recommendation or requirements with timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.
- 3.4 The Independent Persons' Regulation 44 Reports follow internal processes which ensure the following individuals have oversight of information and identified recommendations / requirements to ensure action is completed;
- Service Managers
 - Group Service Manager / Responsible Individual

The role of Elected Members within Regulation 44

- 3.5 The LA aims to comply with legislation which sets out the statutory requirements for the roles of responsibilities for the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Looked after Children covering both social care and education.
- 3.6 Legislation notes that the Leader Members and **Corporate Parents have a particular responsibility for vulnerable children who are looked after**. Internal processes are in place, which invite Corporate Parents to participate in Regulation 44 visits to children's homes on three occasions within any one year. The regulatory body (Ofsted) have expectations that there is oversight by Corporate Parents which is recognised at inspection by external bodies.
- 3.7 The aim remains consistent for Corporate Parenting Councillors to demonstrate that they are interested in and listen to their views and wishes of Looked After Children and Care Leavers. This would be achieved through Elected Members participation in Regulation 44 visits of residential children's homes. **Corporate Parents are expected to;**
- **Establish good working relationships with staff within the homes**
 - **Feel confident that the staff will provide an honest view of the service**
 - **Recognise the strengths of the service / home / staff team**
 - **Be confident enough to recognise the areas of development to improve the home / service**
- 3.8 The process of independent monitoring remains consistent and provides Corporate Parents with the opportunity to form a judgement in relation to the "Quality of Care" delivered to children based on a range of evidence sources including the views of children in the home. For Members undertaking visits to children's homes (Independent Monitoring Regulation 44 Visits) the role is more extensive and as previously noted requires Members to be informed of the following;
- Are the right structures and systems in place in order for Bradford Metropolitan District Council (BMDC) to be an effective Corporate Parent and are all the right partners involved?

- Current (and proposed) government expectations regarding the service to looked after children and care leavers
- Know how well BMDC is doing in comparison with other councils and our own past performance
- Know if there are sound mechanisms within BMDC for hearing and responding to the views of:
 - looked after children and care leavers
 - parents / carers
- Have a good picture of which needs we are meeting and which we are failing to meet?
- Know if there is an action plan across the council and involving partner agencies the service and to ensure it responds to changing needs?
- Know what our looked after children and care leavers think about the service we are providing.

3.9 Further to recommendations noted at a previous Corporate Parenting Panel (January 2017) to enable increased participation in independent monitoring Regulation 44 visits, arrangements were made offering Elected Members a range of dates covering the period August 2017 – March 2018. This was aimed to facilitate improved planning, scheduling and participation. Despite efforts made to improve scheduling and inviting Elected Members to book dates, monitoring reflects there has been little improvement in participation levels. **Please refer to table one (below)**

<u>Table One</u>	Cllr Carol Thirkill / Cllr Sarfraz Nazir	Cllr Angela Tait / Cllr Mohammed Shafiq	Cllr Sinead Engel / Cllr Fozia Shaheen	Cllr Dale Smith / Cllr Mike Pollard	Cllr Nicola Pollard / Cllr Rachel Sunderland
August	2 visits in one day Available dates: 10 th , 18 th August			2 visits in one day Available dates: 10 th , 18 th August	
September		2 visits in one day Available dates: 8 th , 11 th , 12 th , 20 th , 21 st , 29 th September			2 visits in one day Available dates: 8 th , 11 th , 12 th , 20 th , 21 st , 29 th September
October			2 visits in one day Available dates: 11 th , 12 th , 20 th , 23 rd , 24 th October		
November	2 visits in one day Available dates 10 th , 14 th , 22, 23rd November			2 visits in one day Available dates 10 th , 14 th , 22, 23rd November	

December		2 visits in one day Available dates: 5th, 13th, 14th, 22nd, December	2 visits in one day Available dates: 5th, 13th, 14th, 22nd, December		
January				2 visits in one day Available dates: 12th, 15th, 24 th , 25 th January	2 visits in one day Available dates: 12th, 15th, 24 th , 25 th January
February	2 visits in one day Available dates: 14 th , 15 th , 26th, 27th, February		2 visits in one day Available dates: 14 th , 15 th , 26th, 27th, February		
March		2 visits in one day Available dates: 8 th , 15 th , 20 th , 28 th , 29 th , March			2 visits in one day Available dates: 8 th , 15 th , 20 th , 28 th , 29 th , March

- 3.10 The table below provides a four year overview of Corporate Parents participation in Independent Monitoring Regulation 44 Visits. This is a picture which would benefit from positive change to better reflect the commitment of Corporate Parents to children and young people living within the LA residential and respite home.

Four Year Overview of Elected Member Visits			
Apr 2014 – Mar 2015	Apr 2015 – Mar 2016	Apr 2016 – Mar 2017	Apr 2017 – Mar 2018
6 visits completed by Elected Members	13 visits completed by Elected Members	15 visits completed by Elected Members	9 visits completed by Elected Members (Apr 17– Dec 17)

Ofsted Inspection Outcome

- 3.11 Bradford offers a diverse and varied range of service provision for looked after children and young people, delivered across the ten residential and respite homes in the area including; emergency, short / medium and long term residential care as well as specialist provisions offering short break respite care for children and young people with complex health and disabilities.
- 3.12 It is noted that within this inspection year one home has closed. The LA is preparing to register a new specialist home within the coming months. This will take the number of registered LA homes to 11.
- 3.13 Following the introduction of “Social Care Common Inspection Framework in April 2017” all regulatory inspections are being conducted in a manner which allows there to be greater parity throughout the inspection process. This is due to homes / provisions / services being inspected against similar provisions. There have been additional changes to the inspection processes which notes that all homes judged to be good or outstanding will not require an interim inspection to be completed within the inspection year.

- 3.14 Eight of the 10 homes have completed their **Full Inspections** for the 2017 – 2018 inspection year. Two homes are awaiting inspection. These will be completed before the end of March 2017. The overall picture in the main is positive. The homes are responding to the challenges of a much more robust approach to the internal and regulatory inspection processes for children's homes to ensure the best level of care is achieved. At this time (December 2017) there are 10 registered children's homes in Bradford. There are two homes still to be inspected to complete the full inspections within this inspection year.
- 3.15 Please refer to Appendix 1 (**attached**) to demonstrate the current inspection judgements for the LA residential and respite homes 2017 – 2018. This also provides an overview of the last four years inspection outcome.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

N/A.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

N/A.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

N/A.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

N/A.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

N/A.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

N/A.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

N/A.

7.6 TRADE UNION

N/A.

.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

N/A.

**7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

N/A.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

N/A.

9. OPTIONS

N/A.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That Corporate Panel Members note the report.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Overview of Inspection Outcomes – Bradford Residential & Respite Children's Homes.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

N/A.