

Report of the Strategic Director – Children’s Services to the meeting of The Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 12th April 2021.

Subject:

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Local Authority Children’s Homes and Regulation 44 activity

Summary statement:

This report provides the Corporate Parenting Panel with a summary of Regulation 44 activity in the previous twelve-month period and an update on our eleven children’s homes.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

It is important that children in care are not disadvantaged in comparison with their peers. Care leavers are potentially particularly disadvantaged group due to their often limited financial means and inability to fund activities that carers would normally fund for children in care. The council has a duty to promote opportunities for children in care and care leavers as a corporate parent. Regulation 44 activity supports this duty.

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Portfolio:

Children and Families

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children’s Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the Corporate Parenting Panel with a summary of Regulation 44 activity in the previous twelve-month period. The report also provides an update on the management arrangements for the disabled children's homes and plans for the future.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Regulation 44 Independent monitoring of children's homes is a regulatory requirement which requires "the registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month". This requires arrangements for independent monitoring of the 11 Local Authority (LA) Children's Residential and Short Break Respite Homes.
- 2.2 The homes offer a variety of services which respond to individual plans and adhere to the homes Statement of Purpose. The 11 homes offer a range of care provisions including:
- 2 x Short Breaks Respite for children with disabilities
 - 1 x Residential Home for children with disabilities
 - 4 x Residential Home for children and young people
 - 3 x Residential Home - Specialist BPP Provisions
 - 1 x Residential & Outreach Hub - Specialist BPP Provision
- 2.3 Each home has been subject to independent monitoring each month, which has been completed through remote and virtual processes in order to adhere to the Children's Homes Regulations and demonstrate to Ofsted of the LA arrangements for on-going monitoring within the homes which have included arrangements 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.
- 2.4 Bradford council has maintained regular monthly monitoring of all of the Residential Children's Homes and Short Break Respite Homes to ensure safeguarding arrangements are in place. The processes for the independent monitoring of the Children's Homes has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Alternative arrangements have been in place since mid-March 2020. Monitoring has been undertaken through utilising technology to support:
- Remote monitoring,
 - Virtual monitoring tours of the homes
 - Video consultation with children and young people and staff
 - Working collaboratively with homes Managers and staff to ensure all reasonable measures are in place to complete the Independent Monitoring.
- 2.5 These routines have been embedded and processes are operating well during these difficult circumstances.
- 2.6 Monthly reports have been completed, highlighting areas of strength and development to support the home and care of children and young people. Monitoring processes continue to offer oversight and scrutiny in respect to the management of the home and the care of

children and young people which ensures the Independent Person is able to form an opinion as to whether:

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

2.7 All reports are routinely escalated to the home's Registered Manager and the Council's Responsible Individual Mark Trinder for comments and also to Ofsted. The Covid-19 pandemic has informed change with regards the routines for Ofsted Inspections being carried out. Interim arrangements for Ofsted Inspections have been introduced during this period. Decisions to undertake Quality Assurance Visits have been informed by the Regulation 44 reports, any complaints and notifications to Ofsted providing them with "key lines of enquiry" for each visit.

2.8 Monitoring through the Regulation 44 process highlights areas of development on a month by month basis. Action plans are completed by the homes manager to address areas of concern, inform change and improve outcomes for children and young people and / or the home. The information is collated and enables themes within the residential service which require response at a home's level and where necessary at a strategic level. Themes highlighted from independent monitoring have included:

- review of PEP / PEP available on LCS
- Medication
- Fire
- H&S Checks
- Physical Intervention; recording / use / training
- Missing Processes; recording consistently, access to Missing Return Home Interviews, following protocols, training in relation to missing risks
- Staffing levels
- Balance of staff / use of external agency
- Internal systems for management oversight
- Finalising of plans left in draft format on LCS; Placement Plans / Care Plan / Pathway Plans
- Regular review of Internal Care Plans; Positive Support Plans / Outcome Star

2.9 It is recognised that the homes have had to maintain operation and delivery of service throughout Covid. This has been with an awareness teams have functioned with vacant positions, a percentage of staff shielding and an increase in numbers of staff required to self-isolate. This has been managed with support from a core of dedicated staff members working flexibly, utilising casual staff and employing regular agency staff on short term contracts. The Responsible Individual has recognised the challenges and has consequently reduced occupancy to enable staff to invest in care of children and young people resident in the homes.

2.10 Throughout this time the homes have encountered challenges associated to the restrictions imposed as a consequence of the Covid pandemic. This has included; promoting children and young people engagement in in-house education, increased concerns due to restrictions on family contact, presentation of emotional dysregulation. Access to interventions / services has been affected or delivered remotely / virtually. Monitoring has identified concerns regarding escalation of dysregulated behaviours within the homes. The homes have managed this through use of strategies and employed use of Team Teach. Access to face to face training has impacted which is seen to have resulted in refresh of skills being delayed

leading to some concerns relating to staff's skills / knowledge / use of physical intervention and recording of information. There is evidence of dysregulated behaviours, decline in relationships with adults caring for children and young people and increase in police interventions within individual homes.

- 2.11 There have been no full inspections completed by Ofsted within the inspection year 2020 / 2021. Ofsted have utilised the Regulation 44 reports to inform decision in relation to the completion of QA Visits which have occurred since September 2020.
- 2.12 Ofsted have undertaken a number of QA and subsequent monitoring visits within this inspection year (2020 / 2021). These have taken place for a number of reasons:
- concerns highlighted via the Regulation 44 process
 - to resume regulatory processes
- 2.13 There is a link with concerns which were raised through Regulation 44 visit which were realised through the QA visit leading to the home (Valley View House) being placed in compliance by Ofsted. The home has experienced follow up visits to assess progress and determine outcomes. Valley View House has achieved expectations and came out of compliance following review of works by Ofsted. The home continues to work hard to ensure the practice routines and delivery of care remains at an acceptable standard and in line with CHR. Whilst there are challenges it is felt that the homes continue to work to provide good quality care to children and young people residing in the homes.
- 2.14 The homes have been supported through good communication links with Ofsted / Inspectors by the Responsible Individual and home managers. The Responsible Individual has made a concerted effort to ensure placements have been undertaken through good matching processes ensuring experiences for children arriving in to the residential homes and the care delivered is of a good standard. The Responsible Individual has ensured beds have been blocked where required. There is a much clearer picture with regards placement suitability which has informed better outcomes for children living within the homes. The homes managers / Service Managers and Responsible Individual have ensured planned transition have taken place for a number of children. This has been effective in supporting some children into placements better suited to meeting individual needs.

	Number of Beds	Occupancy	Ofsted Inspection Judgement 2019/2020	Ofsted QA / Monitoring Visit 2020 / 2021
Clockhouse Short Break Provision for CWD	6		Good 2019-2020	No
Hollies Mainstream Residential Childrens Home	6	5	Good 2019-2020	No
Hollybank Specialist BPP Provision	4	3	Good 2019-2020	11.03.21 no concerns
Meadowlea Specialist BPP Provision	7	7	Outstanding 2019-2020	No
Newholme Specialist BPP Provision	4	4	Declined Effectiveness 2019-2020	8/9 th Sept 2020 no concerns
Owlthorpe Mainstream Residential Childrens Home	6	2	Requires Improvement 2019-2020	15.09.20 no concerns
			Interim Inspection 25.02.20 Improved Effectiveness	
Rowan House	6	5	Good 2019-2020	No
Sky View House Mainstream Residential Childrens Home	6	6	Good 2019-2020	24.01.21 no concerns
Valley View House Residential Childrens Home for CWD	7	6	Requires Improvement 2019-2020	7 th /8 th Oct 2020 27 th Oct 2020 15 th Dec 2020

Wedgewood House Short Break Provision for CWD	6		Good 2019-2020	No
Willows Specialist BPP Residential & Outreach Provision	4	3	Good 2019-2020	No

Plans for the future

- 2.15 We have recently regraded the Regulation 44 post and this has enabled us to fill our additional vacancy. We will therefore be fully staffed from mid-March.
- 2.16 We are now intending to extend the role of the Regulation 44 Officer to include Quality Assurance visits for Post 16 “unregulated” placements. We are in the process of developing a QA form that will align to the Leaving Care regulations to quality assure the delivery of services to young people aged 16+ accessing such provisions.
- 2.17 The aim of this is to strengthen the quality-assurance of placements within the unregulated sector. Whilst the Quality Assurance visit will be undertaken by the Regulation 44 Officer this work will be done in partnership with Placement Co-Ordination (who commission and identify the post 16 placement) and Care Leavers Service who place young people in the placements.
- 2.18 The aim is to drive up the standard of the care provided to our young people who reside in these placements; who are progressing with a plan for independence to ensure that they are well equipped to deal with life’s challenges in adulthood.

Update on Bradford’s children’s homes

- 2.20 There has been a recent change to the way that our children’s homes are managed.
- 2.21 Prior to October 2020 the three homes for disabled children (Valley View, Clockhouse and Wedgewood) were line-managed within the part of the service that was responsible for disabled children’s services.
- 2.22 This presented a number of challenges. The role of Responsible Individual is a statutory role that has legal responsibility for our homes. In Bradford this role is held by the Head of Provider Services. However, until October 2020 the Head of Provider Services did not have direct management responsibility for the disability homes.
- 2.23 This was changed in October 2020 and the three homes are now managed by the Head of Service / Responsible Individual within Provider Services which provides for greater oversight and consistency and thus far is working well.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- None

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

➤ None

5. Responsible IndividualISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

None

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

➤ None

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

➤ NA

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

➤ NA

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

➤ NA

7.4 HUMAN Responsible IndividualIGHTS ACT

➤ NA

7.5 TRADE UNION

➤ NA

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

➤ NA

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

➤ None

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

The report supports the members of the panel to discharge their Corporate

Parenting Responsibility in respect of children living in our children's homes.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

None

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

➤ None

9. OPTIONS

➤ The report is for information only

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ The report is for information only

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

➤ None