

Report of the Strategic Director, Children's Services to the meeting of Corporate Parenting to be held on 8 February 2023

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Subject:

National Review – Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs placed in residential settings

Summary statement:

The National Safeguarding Panel have undertaken phase 1 of a review to understand why a significant number of children with disabilities and complex needs (108) came to suffer very serious abuse and neglect whilst living in three privately provided residential settings in the Doncaster area operated by the Hesley Group. Doncaster Council initiated a complex abuse investigation in response to twelve 'whistleblowing' allegations. They referred these allegations to the Panel and it was agreed that a national review was needed.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

There are no direct implications for equality and diversity arising from this report. The Council has a duty to ensure that its services comply with the public sector equality duty.

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1. SUMMARY

- 1.1** The National Safeguarding Panel have undertaken phase 1 of a review to understand why a significant number of children with disabilities and complex needs (108) came to suffer very serious abuse and neglect whilst living in three privately provided residential settings in the Doncaster area operated by the Hesley Group. Doncaster Council initiated a complex abuse investigation in response to twelve 'whistleblowing' allegations. They referred these allegations to the Panel and it was agreed that a national review was needed.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Phase One of the review has considered the experiences of children placed in the Hesley provision in Doncaster. This includes developing an understanding of how children came to be placed in these settings, what happened to them and what factors and issues may have contributed to their experiences of abuse and neglect. Phase Two will consider the broader safeguarding needs of this group of children and young people to improve safeguarding policy and practice. Work on Phase Two will commence in late autumn and conclude by March 2023
- 2.2** A number of organisations have contributed to the review and identified that a catalogue of abuse and serious harm. A complex criminal investigation into what happened to these children is being progressed by South Yorkshire Police.
- 2.3** As part of the ongoing review, every Director of Children's Services was contacted to undertake two urgent actions –
- 2.4 Action 1**
Directors of Children's Services to ensure that Quality and Safety Reviews are completed for all children with complex needs and disabilities currently living within placements with the same registrations (residential specialist schools registered as children's homes) to ensure they are in safe, quality placements.
- 2.5 Action 2**
In relation to this group of children (as defined above), all Directors of Children's Services should ensure:
- I. That the host authority LADO for each individual establishment reviews all information on any LADO referrals, complaints and concerns over the last 3 years relating to the workforce in such establishments to ensure these have been appropriately actioned.
- II. The host authority LADO should then contact any local authorities who currently have children placed in the establishments in their area if there are any outstanding enquiries being carried out regarding staff employed in the home.
- 2.6** As part of the response to the National Safeguarding Panel, the information from the review is to be shared with the Safeguarding Partnership and Corporate Parenting Panel.

2.7 The report has been anonymised to protect the child's personal information.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

None identified.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

None identified.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

None identified.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

None identified.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None identified.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None identified.

7.5 TRADE UNION

None identified.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

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

None identified.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This is to ensure that elected members and partners are aware of the information shared with the National Safeguarding Panel. The review has provided reassurance that the three children identified living in residential special schools are safe and well cared for.

Further implications will need to be considered as the police investigation and police are concluded.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

None identified.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

Not Applicable.

9. OPTIONS

At this stage this is information for the panel to be aware of. As the review progresses further changes to practice will be identified that will need to be given consideration to ensure that arrangements for these vulnerable children continue to be safe and focused on their needs.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Corporate Parenting Panel are respectfully asked to note the information shared. Further updates will be provided as the National Safeguarding Panel complete their ongoing review.

11. APPENDICES

Bradford Children's Services Response to the National Safeguarding Panel dated 30.11.2022.

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Report - Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings. Phase 1 Report October 2022