

Response information for National Safeguarding Panel

On receipt of the list of identified establishments from Ofsted, Bradford cross referenced information with our Placement Coordination system and identified one child. A further check with the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) identified another child. A final check of our LCS system identified a further child. In total, 3 children living in the identified establishments were identified who are open to Bradford Children's Social Care.

Overview and Details of Children

Child 1

Date of Placement – 20.07.2022

Actions taken in line with Appendix A

Child 1 has an EHCP but is not recorded as a child with disabilities.

The Appendix A points were considered during a visit to the home for Child 1's statutory Child in Care review on 28 September 2022. Information was gathered by Child 1's IRO and recorded as part of the minutes for his review.

No specific concerns or issues were flagged when going through the points in Appendix A. It was highlighted that Child 1 does not have a communication plan in place because Child 1 does not have any communication needs which need addressing. The IRO was happy that she has been able to communicate effectively with Child 1 in the past. On this occasion, Child 1 did not want to speak to the IRO or participate in his review.

Child 1's mother attended the review and noted that she is happy with Child 1's care and feels this is better suited to him than being in a foster placement. She has no concerns about the placement. Child 1's mother and his social worker are both really pleased with the efforts made by the placement to support Child 1 to spend time with his mother and his brothers and sisters. Child 1 is driven by the placement twice a month to spend time with his family – once to see his mother and the other time to see his brothers and sisters.

Child 1 has a bespoke educational timetable focused to his needs and skills. Child 1 loves cooking and some of his lessons are tailored to this, with a recipe being provided for Child 1 to follow.

Child 1's social worker is happy with contact from the placement around any incidents and the social worker plans to review records of any incidents and do some spot checks when visiting in the future.

A check was undertaken with LADO in Cumbria, which revealed that 50 referrals had been made in the last 3 years. Due to the high number of referrals, the LADO clarified that 44 of the 50 allegations/consultations related to a joint police/Local Authority enquiry in 2020 that investigated allegations made by 17 children in relation to 25 staff who were at the time of investigation employed or had been previously employed at Wings School. All of those 44 allegations/consultations have now concluded; whilst the overarching allegation was substantiated in respect of management of allegations, none of the specific allegations were substantiated.

It was noted there are 2 live allegation management processes at the time of writing this report that relate to Child 1. This was followed up during a visit by Child 1's social worker to placement on 22.11.22. Both allegations relate to the same member of staff. After the first allegation management process started, the member of staff became subject to a risk management plan in conjunction with the LADO in Cumbria and continued working. After the second allegation management process opened, the member of staff was suspended. Child 1 is therefore safe in placement as the member of staff in question is not in work and appropriate actions have been taken as a result of allegations made. The two live allegations do not relate directly to Child 1.

Child 1 was visited in his classroom and also in his home. Child 1's room is personalised to him with lots of family photos around. Child 1 is in a small classroom of 6-8 students, 1 teacher and 2 teaching assistants. He does not have 1-1 support but can go to a safe space in the classroom if he needs to.

Child 1 spoke about having a good relationship with the care staff and school staff. Child 1 is growing confident in the placement and is able to say how he is feeling. He is attending sports groups outside of placement and described being happy.

Child 2

Start of Placement – 20.02.2020

Actions take in line with Appendix A

Child 2 had a Child in Care review on 11 July 2022. Child 2 has an EHCP in place and is recorded as having a learning disability, communication needs, personal care needs and a diagnosis of Autism or Asperger's Syndrome.

Child 2 was visited on 16th November 2022 and was seen in both her educational setting and the bungalow where she lives. Child 2 has a communication plan in place which is reviewed monthly or when changes are needed. Child 2's parents had played an active role in the communication planning. All staff working with Child 2 are required to read the plan and sign it to state that they understand how to use the plan.

Equally Child 2 has a very clear positive behaviour plan, targeted to her specific sensory needs. There was evidence that staff sign the plan at each update to confirm they understand how to use this. There have been no recorded incidents relating to Child 2 in the last 12 months in either the residential or educational sites.

No concerns were raised by any of the other checks completed in both the residential and educational sites. Very positive interactions and relationships were noted with staff

members where Child 2 lives. It was also evident that the staff in the in the education site have a very good understanding of Child 2.

Child 2 has good school attendance – 95.2% - with just 2 days missed due to sickness. Child 2 has a regularly reviewed PEP and EHCP, targeted to supporting her towards living independently in the future.

A positive feature noted was that residential staff walk Child 2 to her education site daily and there is a handover with education staff so they are aware of any issues from that morning. This is done privately to ensure Child 2 is not reminded of any negativity before starting her day. If something positive happened, this is shared in front of Child 2 to celebrate her successes.

Child 2 speaks to her family at home daily, supported by staff who provide an overview of the day with Child 2 joining in to say hello or key words.

Child 2 spends time with her family every other weekend, either through family coming to visit Child 2 or Child 2 being taken to see them. Transport is shared between placement and family, who noted there is excellent communication with placement. Child 2's mum was contacted as part of this review and spoke highly of the placement, stating that she "never wants Child 2 to leave". She is pleased with Child 2's progress and believes Child 2 is happy living there.

Child 2 spent time with the reviewer on 16 November 2022 and they communicated using the agreed plan, walking from the school site to the bungalow. Child 2 sang and held the reviewer's hand and seemed comfortable in her home setting. Child 2 has been seen in both the home and educational sites on previous visits by social workers and no concerns have been noted.

A check was undertaken with LADO in Cumbria which highlighted there have been 15 substantiated allegations management investigations over the past 3 years. There is also an open investigation. The open referral does not relate to Child 2. 1 LADO referral has been made which involved Child 2 but this did not progress to a formal allegation management process. An internal investigation was undertaken and actions recorded, which were shared with Children's Social Care and family at the time. The outcome was agreed to be appropriate.

The 15 substantiated allegations management investigations, whilst not relating to Child 2, were explored by the team manager further to their visit. Half of these allegations related to staff having had a speeding ticket driving the placement minibus, therefore allegations management processes took place relating to each child in the minibus. The team manager is assured that there are no themes or patterns that need to be explored further.

Child 3

Start of Placement – 28.02.2021

Actions take in line with Appendix A

Child 3 has an EHCP for social, emotional and/or mental health reasons. Child 3 does not have a communication plan in place.

Child 3 had a Child in Care review on 11 August 2022 where it was reported that Child 3 was doing well, has no communication issues and is more than able to share his views. The long term plan is for Child 3 to move into a foster placement. Educationally Child 3 is working at below age related expectations but is progressing. He is engaged in positive activities.

A visit to Child 3 to consider the Appendix A took place on the 25 November 2022.

Child 3 has a positive behaviour plan in place which was viewed and signed off by his social worker. Child 3 has incentives in place to support positive behaviour. There were no concerns about the storage of medication etc.

Child 3 was also seen on 14 November 2022 where it was noted that his bedding smelled of urine. Child 3 is known to wet the bed and may have made his bed without telling anybody. Child 3's social worker established on the unannounced visit on the 25 November 2022 that Child 3 sometimes puts his wet pyjamas under the bed, causing the smell. The staff in placement know to check for this and clean the bedding as required. Child 3's social worker had no worries about Child 3's bedroom during the most recent visit and will continue to monitor via future visits.

Child 3 has formed trusting relationships with the residential and educational staff. He is well liked by his peers who look out for him as the youngest child in the placement. Child 3's social worker finds him to be open to talking about all aspects of the placement and if he is not happy about anything, he will make his views known. Child 3 takes part in meetings in the home and shares his views.

Professionals involved with Child 3 feel he has made significant progress since living in this placement. Child 3's social worker visits him in both the residential and educational sites and notes that he is thriving in both settings.

Child 3's social worker reported that she is kept up to date by the placement if there are any issues involving Child 3 or other children in the placement and if any incident is reported to Ofsted. Child 3's social worker always checks the files during visits and discusses anything of interest with the placement manager. There has been challenge previously about recordings/weekly updates.

Child 3 does not spend any time with his parents at this time and they do not have input into his care planning at this time, and therefore have not provided recent views about the placement.

Child 3's social worker believes that the therapy that he is receiving in this placement is having a really positive impact on his sense of self and Child 3 is starting to become curious about his life story and has started talking about wanting to see his brothers and sisters.

Child 3's social worker feels the educational site is equally proactive and Child 3 was identified as the most improved student last term. Objectives about his education were recently reviewed in a PEP meeting/EHCP review.

We have contacted the LADO in Staffordshire who have provided us with the following response:

In line with the National Review we have reviewed the identified residential establishments in our area to ensure that any matters relating to LADO have been dealt with in a robust manner and have been brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

The second part of the review requirement is that other local authorities should be contacted if there are any outstanding enquiries being carried out regarding staff employed in the home. We have reviewed our records in respect of the above setting and I can confirm there are no outstanding enquiries being carried out regarding staff members. As further quality assurance we have no concerns with how any enquiries have been dealt with or how they have concluded.

Urgent Action Two

Bradford does not have any establishments fitting the criteria for this response.

Learning for service improvement – Point 1

What we have recognised as a result of this reporting activity, is that Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are not routinely, as part of their visits and reviewing processes, ensuring that the points raised in Appendix A are covered. The social worker and IRO do not customarily visit the child in both the residential and educational sites on all occasions. They tend to visit announced and the IRO will see the child on the same Child 1y as the review to gather their views.

Achievable Action

- Create a practice guide for those working with our most vulnerable children, utilising some of the points of the Appendix A to ensure this is done and explicitly recorded. This will also ensure that the child's communication plan is viewed and used to communicate with the child. If any specific support is needed by the social worker or the IRO to support them to communicate with the child, then this should be understood and the relevant training provided.
- A reminder to social workers and IROs to remain professionally curious.
- Visits to take place in the residential and educational sites to get an understanding of what home life is like and what school life is like for the child.
- Social Workers visit children in their placements and their school placements routinely during statutory visits and undertake some unannounced to get a more "real" depiction of the child's lived experience.
- IROs ensure that consultations are undertaken prior to the review.

Aspirational Action

It would be positive for children and young people if IROs working with children with complex health and disabilities and/or communication needs had the option of being trained in regard to communication aids.

Advocacy services should have specially trained advocates who can represent the views of children with communication needs.

Learning for service improvement – Point 2

A lot of the information requested in the Appendix A is available to the Social Worker, IRO and Placement Coordination from the reports of the Reg 44 officers.

Reg 44 reports are sent to Placement Coordination when complete and there is a member of staff who reviews these and shares them with social work teams. It is not clear what happens in social work teams with these reports given capacity issues.

When the report highlights any concerns or if themes and patterns of concern are emerging from reporting, this is escalated up within Placement Coordination management and then there would be a meeting with the social work team to plan if any action is needed. This could be a visit to the child to explore some of the themes in more depth and/or a meeting with the placement.

Our Placement Coordination also dip-sample for safer recruitment processes such as requesting DBS for a sample of staff working across the Plus 16 service on an annual basis. This indicates robust oversight from Placement Coordination.

Achievable Action

Incorporate into the Practice Guide, a process chart for social workers and team managers to ensure they know what they are looking for when being sent a Reg 44 report and what action to take, if any.

Also to let them know they can ask for the Reg 44 reports and Inspection reports themselves when considering placing a child and to highlight what they should be looking out for, so that the locality social work input into decision making about placements is more robust.

Learning for service improvement – Point 3

It's not clear if the findings of the National Review Panel have been shared with Adult Social Care and whether there is transferable risk and/or similar issues impacting adults living in similar establishments.

Achievable Action

Share the finalised response report with the chair of the adult safeguarding partnership and principle social worker for adults.

Aspirational Action

Annual thematic audits for our most vulnerable children and adults, completed jointly with Adult Services to identify best practice and shared learning.