

Report sponsor: Andy Smith Strategic Director
Peoples Services
Report author: Sharon Green, Head of Service
Children in Residential Care

Inspection and Monitoring of Children's Homes

Purpose

- 1.1 To provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with an overview of Derby City Council's Children Residential Homes internal and external inspections.
- 1.2 Children's Homes are regulated and inspected by **Ofsted** as required by the Care Standards Act 2000. Inspections are based on the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and Quality Standards. Every Children's Home is inspected at least twice a year, receiving one full and one interim inspection.
- 1.3 *Under the framework, judgements are made on:*
 - Overall progress and experiences of children and young people
 - How well children and young people are helped and protected
 - Impact and effectiveness of leaders and Managers
- 1.4 They judge the home according to a four point scale:
 - **Outstanding**
 - **Good**
 - **Requires improvement**
 - **Inadequate**
- 1.5 **Regulation 44** of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 requires each Home to be visited by an employee of the organisation not directly concerned with the conduct of the home and a report to be written. Some visits are carried out by an independent visitor from outside of the Council. The rest are done by Managers in the Children and Young People's Directorate, who are completely independent of the Homes and have no involvement with young people placed in them. Reports of the visits are sent to Homes Managers who respond to any recommendations. The reports are circulated to Ofsted, Responsible Managers and Democratic Services
- 1.6 **Elected Members** carry out periodic visits to children's homes to monitor the quality of care and the welfare of children and young people. Visits fall within members' corporate parenting responsibilities.

- 1.7 After each visit members report on their observations and recommendations and members are informed of actions taken as a result.

- 1.8 **Assurance Visits** had been undertaken in line with the guidance issued from September 2020 in relation to Covid-19 situation. These replaced the full and interim inspections during the pandemic.

The visits provided Ofsted with assurance that vulnerable children were getting help, care and protection that they needed. It also focused on leadership and Managers, the quality of professional practice and the impact on children and young people's lives. No graded judgement was made.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the content of the report, as inspections are a key element of the regulatory function in relation to Children's Homes. Management visits are a statutory requirement.
- 2.2 To note the content of the report as a Corporate Parent.

Reason(s)

- 3.1 Children Residential Homes are inspected at regular intervals by independent Regulation 44 Inspectors, Ofsted and Members. The inspection reports provides the Service and the Homes Managers with information to support appropriate changes to be made that will enhance a young person experience whilst in our care.
- 3.2 Ofsted judgements are made with regard to what measurable progress has been evidenced towards children achieving their potential and are how they are helped to do so.

Supporting information:

- 4.1 Overview of the Ofsted inspections and Assurance Visits that have taken place since 2020 – September 2021.
- 4.2 Due to Covid, there were no visits undertaken by Ofsted during 2020.
- 4.3 From September 2020, there were 2 Assurance Visits undertaken virtually by Ofsted. Information was requested by Ofsted during the visits to allow robust audits to take place.
- 4.4 The Children Residential Homes are inspected usually at least twice a year, receiving one full and one interim inspection. Where a Home is judged to be 'inadequate', notification is issued to the Home with a timescale given to undertake the actions.

Home	Inspection Type	Date	Judgement
Home A	Assurance Visit	16 September 2020	No Judgement Given (previously in Requiring Improvement to be Good)
Home B	Assurance Visit	30 September 2020	No Judgement Given (Good previous inspection)
Home C	Full	22 June 2021	Inadequate
	Full	4 August 2021	Inadequate
	Full	14 September 2021	Requires Improvement to be Good
Home D*	Monitoring Inspection	31 January 2020	No Judgement Given
Home E	Full	19 May 2021	Good

Ofsted Inspection Outcomes:

*No inspections have taken place since this date at this Home, as the Home is temporarily closed

Ofsted Inspections had previously identified that placement matching of young people needed to improve across the Service, this has improved. Placement matching is where a young person is matched into a vacancy within a Residential Home by taking into consideration the presenting needs of the other young people and children who are already placed within the Home. Where there are Homes located on one site, there is an expectation that placement matching will take into consideration the presenting needs of all young people resident across the whole site. The Manager of the Home is expected to undertake all considerations when making a decision as whether to accept a placement or not.

It should be noted that as a Corporate Parent, placement matching may be a challenge due to the need to accommodate a young person or child where there is a placement breakdown resulting in an emergency referral being made to internal residential due to no other option being available at the point of the referral being made.

During mid 2020, there was limited movement and placements, and therefore there was stability across all the Homes.

Staff resources – recruitment of staff had proved to be a challenge over the last year due to the pandemic and the national social care issue relating to recruitment and retention of Residential Childcare Workers (RCCW). Interviews were undertaken virtually during 2020 due to the pandemic. The Service has also had a number of staff leave due to various factors over the past year, which has resulted in a loss of some experienced staff. This has meant that the Service has needed to adjust some of the work bases for some of the existing staff in order to maintain stability and balance across the teams.

There has been a steady influx of new staff with various life experiences and skills entering into the profession, with a Bankpool now set up to further support service delivery going forward.

The Service is continuing to recruit staff on a rolling programme with regards to Residential Childcare Workers (RCCW).

Some of the Homes also had Covid outbreaks during late 2020 and 2021, that were effectively managed to allow those Homes to remain open throughout. Staffing of those Homes did prove a challenge, however the Service ensured that this did not impact on the young people or children. The Service has acknowledged that a number of staff and Managers were resilient throughout the pandemic, which ensured stability.

Management

It has been a challenge to recruit Homes Managers, as there is a national issue around availability of suitable Managers, which has impacted on the ability to open the Homes that were closed as an interim measure. The Service re-evaluated the job description of the Homes Manager after undertaking market rate comparisons across the sector. This was to support with the recruitment drive, however, there are still challenges within this area.

There has also been significant changes during 2021 across all the Homes in respect of Management resources. Some of the Homes have seen Management changes due to various reasons. This has had an impact in some cases, on the Homes.

Education

Covid initially impacted on the education of all our young people due to the Schools closures initially, lack of motivation to engage differently, shielding/self-isolating and lack of laptops.

Laptops were provided and sourced by the Virtual Schools Head. Education meetings were set up and held regularly with the Virtual School leads for all the Homes and the Virtual School Headteacher, to offer support and advice where required to each of the Homes. Since the Schools have reopened, education attendance has vastly improved for our young people and Children.

It should be noted that where a young person or child chooses not to engage in education, support is put into place by staff and the Virtual School leads. Alternative provision is also provided by the Virtual Schools which has enabled our young people to actively engage in vocational activities, whilst being supported to address some of the barriers young people may have to more formal education settings.

Health

Health meetings have been taking place each month with the dedicated Nurse for each Home and the Managers. Discussions take place, with advice provided to support the decision making.

Due to Covid, appointments were impacted such as attending a Dentist. This has now changed due to the reopening of the appointment systems.

Health have also supported the Home Managers with healthy lifestyle understanding, including diets and smoking cessation, exercise and medication.

The areas of Health and Education are audited by Ofsted during inspections.

Elected Members Visits:

- 5.1 There were no Member visits undertaken during the last year due to Covid restrictions.

Regulation 44 Visits:

- 6.1 In relation to Regulation 44 Visits, temporary measures were taken in 2020 in line with Government guidelines and Ofsted to restrict actual visits to the Homes. This approach was taken to minimise the transmission of Covid in line with the protocols for visitors across all the Homes during this time. A hybrid approach was implemented in September 2020 against a risk assessment, that allowed a limited visit to take place and information presented to the Regulation 44 Visitor before the visit, which would inform the key lines of enquiry.
- 6.2 **Home A:** No major issues were identified. The Home recruited an interim Manager during 2021. The recording of information had been previously highlighted as an issue. There has been some improvement within this area with some staff cited as exemplars for their recordings. Training has been provided across the Service for all staff. Work is ongoing to embed consistency of practice, including that of new staff.
- 6.4 **Home B:** No major issues were identified. Record keeping was identified previously as an issue. Again, training has been provided to all staff within this area to ensure robust information is captured. Some staff have been cited for their recordings, with Managers using these as examples to others to aid development.
- 6.5 **Home C:** This Home reopened in September, and there has been no major issues identified. Staff development and recording were identified as issues for the Home previously. A new Manager and Deputy were recruited after the previous Manager left, and the Deputy promoted to an interim Manager post in 2021. The Manager and the Deputy have made a number of changes to ensure that staff are fully supported and developed to undertake their role. Management oversight is in place to ensure that the Home continually supports the young people.

- 6.6 **Home D:** This Home has been temporarily closed since January 2020. Regulation 44 reports are submitted in relation to the décor and grounds. Work is ongoing with regards to the recruitment of staff to ensure that the Home can be reopened.
- 6.7 **Home E:** No major issues were identified. An interim Manager was put into place to support the Home following the death of the previous Manager. Record keeping was identified as an area for improvement previously, with some exemplar record keeping cited by the Regulation 44 Visitor. Training has been rolled out across the Service to ensure that they complete robust recording.
- 6.8 The actions taken in response to Regulation 44 visits are complimented by monthly in depth Regulation 45 monitoring by the Manager, and are overseen by the Deputy Head of Service. This format is being currently reviewed to ensure the efficacy of these meetings.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 7.1 Young people and Children are consulted, with a view to ascertaining their wishes and feelings. This is recorded in their Care Plans, Liquid Logic (LCS) recording and young people's log of meetings. All concerns are recorded and responded to.
- 7.2 Young people and Children are also encouraged to attend the Children in Care Council meetings, however given Covid-19, the format was changed to reflect the new Government guidelines. Meetings are undertaken virtually, however there are plans to relook at this moving forward in a safe environment. Attending these meetings allows young people to make their views known about their Home and care.
- 7.3 Young people and Children also have independent advocacy support who act on their behalf, enabling them to raise concerns from someone who is not associated with the Home they live in.

Other options

- 8.1 None

Financial and value for money issues

- 9.1 The average cost of a placement within a Derby's Children's Residential Home, compares favourably with similar placements in other local authorities and the independent sector.

Legal implications

- 10.1 Children's residential Homes are regulated by Ofsted and are required to comply with National Minimum Standards.

Other significant implications

- 11.1 None

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal Finance Service Director(s)	Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help & Children's Social Care	
Report sponsor Other(s)	Andy Smith, Strategic Director Peoples Service	06.10.2021

Background papers:

List of appendices: