



Derby City Council

Corporate Parenting Sub Commission
14 February 2012

Report of the Strategic Director of Children and
Young People

ITEM 7

Councillor Visits to CYP May 2011 – January 2012

SUMMARY

1.1 6 October 2011 – Bute Walk – Councillor Evonne Williams

Report provided.

Issues Raised:

Building

A number of issues were raised in relation to the internal fabric of the building, furnishings and plumbing.

Care & Control

In response to logs reporting young people missing, Cllr Williams raised the possibility of phones being fitted with GPS.

Education

Too many exclusions and instances of schools expecting the Home to remove children who misbehave.

Staffing

Too many vacancies – i.e. 1 x Deputy Manager, 1 x pt RSW, 1 x cook (+ 1 RSW on a phased return to work)

Children's Views

Cllr Williams raised the possibility of young people being provided with £50 each for the purpose of personalising their bedrooms.

Staff

All staff met by Cllr Williams deemed to be very friendly'.

Response to issues raised provided by Kevin Fletcher 1.12.11 in which he notes that

Building

- Blinds and curtains will be ordered once the home's manager has identified the best option for the home.

Issues

- Kevin Fletcher met with Maintenance Project Surveyor Mark Strawther on 11th October to go through the plan of works that Mark had drawn up in September. The plan included completing work in the laundry. Contractors have been given the task of completing this work and will liaise with the home's manager to ensure that the work is completed in keeping with health and safety requirements.
- The fire doors will be rectified under the refurbishment works agreed on 11th

October.

- Plaster work throughout the home is to be repaired under the planned refurbishment.
- The decision not to include the dining room when the lounge was improved was made because there was not sufficient fund available to do this at the time. The current planned refurbishment includes improvement to the ceiling in the dining room.
- The problem with the upstairs toilet is somewhat complicated. During the last major refurbishment new toilets were fitted and coupled up to the existing pipe work as it was not feasible to remove this from the building. The connection required a bend in the system which was within normal tolerance and not thought to be exceptional but seems, as you noted, to be blocking on a regular basis. It is not clear whether this is because of the way the toilet is connected or because of misuse. Further investigation into this will be undertaken by Mark Strawther. It should be noted that although there is only one toilet on the landing there are another two toilets available in the home for young people to use.
- Bath handles will be made safer as part of the refurbishment.
- Stronger door handles will be provided as part of the refurbishment.

A third monitor has been acquired for the computer room.

Care and Control

The use of GPS to monitor young people's whereabouts would be a police and civil liberties issue. We do not have the equipment to enable us to do this.

Education

Cllr Williams' concerns are shared by all. Notwithstanding the challenges to the home and schools, the Education Welfare Officer actively supports residential staff in raising concerns with school staff about the inappropriateness of exclusion as a response to all difficulties. She is also included in meetings between staff from Bute Walk and schools designed to ensure a united approach to the difficulties.

Staffing

The Authority is going through a period of change and restructure. During this period there was a delay in recruiting to the home's manager's post. Whilst this happened the deputy manager was given a temporary acting up position which left a vacancy in the management team of deputy manager. Recent attempts to recruit an established home's manager have been unsuccessful and we will be looking at alternative means of supporting the management of the home until this can be resolved.

There has been a need for planned reduction in staffing at the home to achieve the savings required under the current budget constraints. This will eventually lead to a

reduction in staffing at the home of one assistant manager when this can be achieved through normal staff turn over. However, we will reduce staffing at the home by one RCWS until this can be achieved.

Agency staff have been employed to cover some of the staff absences but the number of agency workers has also increased because there has been a need to increase staffing levels in order to support the home with the difficulties staff are experiencing in managing the behaviour of the young people.

There was a delay in confirming the cook in post because the forms were lost. This has now been resolved and the cook is due to start on 19th December 2011.

Children's Views

We consult with young people when replacing furniture and purchase items for them to help personalise rooms as part of normal practice. We do this on the principle of what is needed and reasonable rather than working to a specific amount of money.

1.2 11 October 2011 – Cricklewood – Councillor Evonne Williams

Report provided.

Issues raised:

Building	Crack in bedroom window
Education	Too many exclusions
Staffing	Too many vacancies – i.e. 1 x manager, 2 x RSW's, 1 x cook.
Staff	Cllr Williams noted that all residents were 'happy' with the home and staff'.

Response to issues raised provided by Kevin Fletcher 1.12.11, in which he notes that:

- the cracked bedroom window has been repaired.
- Staff are actively working with the Education Welfare Officer and Newton's Walk to address difficulties being experienced by one young person.
- Agency staff have been used to cover vacancies on a limited basis. The vacant cook's post was filled 31.10.11. A part time vacancy was filled, but had to be re-advertised when the successful candidate changed his mind. Arrangements are in place to interview for the manager's post on 14.12.11.

1.3 13 October 2011 – Lighthouse – Councillor Evonne Williams

No Report

However, Colin Havercroft believes she was impressed with the services provided.

1.4 24 October 2011 – Lighthouse – Councillor Phil Bailey, Council Sara Bolton and Councillor Fay Winter

Report received.

Issues raised:

Building

Fencing, trees and anti climb paint required.
Internal decoration.

General care and well being

Generally very satisfied.

Staffing

Difficulties regarding recruitment.
Low morale.

Response to issues raised

Provided by Kelly Gaskin 9 December 2011.

Building

Fence height and anti climb paint has been referred to maintenance for a response.
The tree was made safe in November 2011.
Re-decoration is booked for January 2012.

Staffing

Morale is high due to an Ofsted inspection on 26/27 October from which the service was found to be outstanding.

1.5 8 November 2011 – Moorfield – Councillor Evonne Williams

No report

No concerns raised

1.6 12 November 2011 – Queensferry Gardens – Councillor Evonne Williams

No report

1.7 22 November 2011 – Queensferry Gardens – Councillor Sara Bolton and Councillor Martin Rawson

Report provided.
Issues raised

Building

Decoration generally presentable. Noted delays in repair requests to Derby Homes. Some issues about neighbourhood relations.

Care and Control

Records checked and acknowledgement of some difficult situations/behaviours to manage.

Health and well being

Noted clear management and expectations.

Education Training and Employment

Full school attendance and transitions being planned.

Staffing

Recruitment and staffing issues raised.

Children's views

Children's suggestions noted regarding purchasing .

Other comments

Issues regarding the reliability of computers and repairs and maintenance appointments.

1.8 Responses to issues raised on 22 November 2011 – report provided by James Grocott (Homes Manager)

Building

The Home's Manager, James Grocott, has fostered constructive relationships with local residents and the Police to try and work with them to minimise the disruption and nuisance caused by young people in the area and at the Home itself.

Care and Control

The Children and Young People's Department and Property Services work together to maintain Children's Homes in a safe and satisfactory condition. Inevitably there are resource constraints and every effort is made to prioritise work and comply with the agreed timescales. The Manager will work closely with Property Services to ensure that outstanding issues are dealt with and there are no unreasonable delays.

The Anti-Social Behaviour team and Youth Offending Service have also been involved in gathering and sharing information and coordinating a response. There have been fewer incidents as a result and this work is continuing.

Staffing

The disciplinary issue that has affected the staffing following the suspension of a staff member has now been concluded with dismissal. A second disciplinary investigation will be concluded shortly. A new residential child care worker has recently been appointed from one of our other establishments and a relief worker is still allocated to the home to replace one full time worker. Further recruitment is under way. All of our Homes have been affected indirectly by staffing reductions resulting from the budget situation and we are making every effort to maintain sufficient staff numbers while contributing to departmental savings.

Children's news

The Home complies with corporate financial procedures for all purchasing. This involves on-line ordering from approved suppliers where suitable. The Manager will investigate whether a Costco Card would be practicable and advantageous.

Other visits

Since your visit a new IT system has been installed, which should speed up connection to the network.

Finally, our Service Level Agreement with Property Services specifies that contractors should make appointments before carrying out work. The Manager is addressing this with Property Services.

1.9 Notes on a visit to Bute Walk Children's Home – 12 December 2011

Members present – Margaret Redfern, Phil Bailey and Derrick Tuplin.

Building

1. The building has a tired and rather scruffy appearance. It was difficult to locate because of inadequate road signs.
2. Little or no outside play equipment or seating.
3. The interior is adequate but is in need of numerous minor/moderate repairs.
4. The kitchen is tired with a broken glass door pane.
5. There was a broken window in the dining area.

6. Many windows around the building have no curtains or blinds including at least one child's bedroom and the bathrooms and toilets.
7. The fire alarm system opens all the external doors when triggered. Other H & S issues were raised.
8. There are many other items of poorly finished repairs and modifications, the floor coverings were dirty.
9. The manager and staff appear to be snowed under by endless minor repairs which are taking time away from caring for the children.
10. All three councillors agreed that an onsite handy man could deal with these more efficiently than the current system. It may be possible for such a person to be shared by all of our council homes.

Care and Control

Problems of settling the children for the night were reported. This is especially difficult because there are no waking staff at night, hence day staff are often very tired in the morning.

The incident logs showed a number of occasions when restraint was used. These all seem to have been dealt with professionally.

Some of the children smoke and whilst this is not encouraged it is difficult to allow children off the premises to do this.

Health Wellbeing and Diversity

The children are well fed and enjoy the food. They help to plan menus and go out with staff to buy ingredients.

All the children are registered with a local GP.

The staff that we met know the children well and adapt the care to the individual. Allowances were paid to the children with the guidelines.

Education, Training and Employment

All but one of the children has a school place or a training position. One boy is currently refusing to attend school. He has sanctions imposed on school days. Several of the older children are working towards full time apprenticeships.

Staffing

The home currently has three full time vacancies approximately one third of the total. The manager's role has been covered by the assistant manager for a year.

There has been no paid cook for a year. The older children have taken on much of the cooking. A newly appointed cook is due to start 19 December 2011.

The deputy has been acting up for a considerable time due to failure to recruit a suitable manager.

Morale is very low amongst staff.

The cleaner has just over twenty hours a week this is not enough to undertake

anything other than top surface cleaning and this is evident within Bute Walk.

Children's views

We had opportunity to talk privately with two of the older children.

The main complaints that they have are:

- Some staff (especially temporary staff) have shown inappropriate responses to incidents.
- There is not enough discussion about house rules for both staff and children
- Some staff have talked too publicly about individual children's problems.

On the positive side they have respect for most of the longer established staff. The children showed us a DVD they had been involved in producing about challenging young people's behaviour they were very proud of this and so they should be!

Other comments

It was understood a refurbishment was going to take place however this has now been cancelled due to the lack of money available to undertake the work.

At the safeguarding children training it was made very clear the test was "would we be happy for our own children to live in DCC children's homes?" and my answer and those of my fellow councillor on this visit was a definite NO.

1.10 Response to visit on 12 December 2011 to Bute Walk – report provided by Kevin Fetcher – Service Manager

Building

The Home can be difficult to locate because it is situated on a walk and we prefer not to draw attention to the fact that it is a Children's Home by placing a sign on it. This helps the home to blend in with other houses on the estate rather than standing out. The home does have seating for the garden areas and suitable outdoor play equipment, but it is kept in a locked garage during the winter.

Since your visit the kitchen has been repainted and a new door fitted on the cupboard. The broken lounge window has also been repaired. Window blinds and curtain poles are on order. Glazing jobs are sometimes delayed because windows are fitted with special toughened glass, which has to be ordered from a specialist supplier.

An industrial cleaner will be hired to remove all stained flooring and upholstery. New doormats will be bought for the entrance areas at the front and back door. Posters on dining room walls have been removed at the request of the young people and are now situated in the computer room.

The metal framed beds were chosen by young people themselves, some of who may now have moved on. As usual, when they are due for replacement the young people

will be consulted.

The fire safety systems at Bute Walk are compliant with the Fire Officer's recommendations and are identical to those in use in our other homes. A balance has to be struck between the need to keep children safe in the building and the need to get them out safely in case of fire. We are aware that the system can be vulnerable to misuse and staff work hard to minimise the risk of this.

Care

This can stretch the capacity of the Home's staff and management as well as that of maintenance staff. However, the Children and Young People's Department and Property Services work together to maintain Children's Homes in a safe and satisfactory condition. Inevitably there are resource constraints and every effort is made to prioritise work and comply with the agreed timescales. The Manager will work closely with Property Services to ensure that outstanding issues are dealt with and there are no unreasonable delays.

Care and Control

We are also working with a new interim manager to address behavioural issues through behaviour management plans, to reduce the incidence of night-time disturbance and damage to the building.

I acknowledge that there are times when young people are unsettled and there is a lot of damage to the fabric of the buildings.

We have in the past looked into the viability of employing a handy person in homes to undertake minor repairs. It is the opinion of Property Services Maintenance and Energy Division that it is not a practical solution to maintenance issues in Children's Homes.

Fire Extinguishers were placed in the staff bedrooms and cupboards as a short-term security measure to prevent them being rendered inoperable by misuse. This does not breach fire safety regulations and is supported by a specific risk assessment. All the staff are aware of the location of the fire extinguishers.

The home has been modified on the ground floor to give access to visitors using wheelchairs. It is not registered to care for children with disabilities and it is recognised in the statement of purpose that careful consideration would be given before admitting a child with a disability.

Education

Young people who fail to attend education are expected to carry out educational activities in the home. An Education Welfare Officer supports the Home to identify educational provision appropriate to the young people's needs. The home also operates an incentive scheme to encourage young people to take part in the education.

Staffing

An experienced manager from another Children's Home has now been transferred temporarily to Bute Walk and there are plans to support the Home with experienced staff from other establishments. A new cook has also started work. Two staff on long-term sickness absence are replaced by relief or temporary staff. Regular team meetings and supervision are taking place, and new flexible rotas give staff a regular working pattern and ensures that minimum staffing requirements are met.

We are concerned that the children have raised the concerns around the lack of consistency between some staff members and inappropriate responses from others. This issue is being addressed in regular team meetings, supervision and shift handover.

All the young people have individual behaviour management plans. Staff actively work to support positive behaviour and address unacceptable behaviour.

Care and Control

All staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention, through the Proact-SCIP training programme. We have recently reviewed our behaviour management plans and staff's understanding of SCIP and will actively support development by providing further training where a needed.

Building

Finally the planned refurbishment programme is under way.

1.11 Members visit to Children's Care Home Report

Name of the home: Moorfields, Redshaw Road

Date of visit 14 December 2011

Names of member(s) visiting

Councillor P Bailey
Councillor F Winter
Councillor K Hillier

Building

Physical Condition/appearance

1a External

Consider physical appearance, location.

Anti climb units have stopped anti-social problems to the outside of the building. There is extremely good parking facilities and also lighting when approaching the

building.

1b Internal

Consider issues such as heating/lighting, furniture and furnishings, washing facilities, kitchen and decoration.

Storm drains has problems being blocked

The internal decoration is extremely pleasing, new bathroom and also kitchens which have had some maintenance.

All fixtures and furnishings extremely well maintained.

2 Care and Control

Look through daily log, incident book, consider behaviour of children.

Incident book logged daily with a low incident rating.

3 Health, Wellbeing and Diversity

Do children like their food, what are arrangements for buying clothes, is everyone registered with a GP, are minority group needs being met.

Good food budget

All children have good medical care, dentists, GP's and medical assessments.

4 Education, Training and Employment

Does each child have a school place? If not, what arrangements are in place for their education?

All children have full time education.

Staffing

The staffing structure to this home is key and it shows. People have years of experience and also on training and developing their skills and knowledge, within this field.

The managers run a very happy, stable family environment.

Other comments

We were told that the young people were also encouraged to take up sporting activities, which helps maintain stability to their lives. Helping them to engage and giving confidence.

1.12 Response from Rod Jones – Head Manager for Residential & Regulated Services

Thank you for visiting Moorfield Children's Centre on 14 December and for your report. I have passed your comments on the manager and staff and I am sure they will be appreciated.

Buildings

The provision of street lighting on the footpath to Sinfin District Centre was investigated in 2011 following a visit by members. There was at that time no funding available install lights but the issue was to be kept under review by the relevant department in case funding did become available. In the current climate I do not expect the position to have changed. We regularly consult young people at Moorfield about issues affecting their lives and this does not appear to be a major issue for them at the moment.

Staffing

Staffing budgets have been reduced in 2011-12 to contribute to departmental savings and contain unit costs. However we are still able to maintain minimum staffing levels and all staff pursue a programme of mandatory training leading to recognised awards. Any training that had to be cancelled for operational reasons would be re-booked as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATION

2.1 N/A

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1 N/A

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1 N/A

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 N/A

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Katie Harris
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For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Name 01332 642669 e-mail katie.harris@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications
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IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

1.1 None

Legal

2.1 None

Personnel

3.1 None

Equalities Impact

4.1 None

Health and Safety

5.1 None

Environmental Sustainability

6.1 None

Asset Management

7.1 None

Risk Management

8.1 None

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

9.1 None

