



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

## CORPORATE PARENTING JOINT SUB COMMISSION 23 FEBRUARY 2005

Report of the Director of Social Services

### Management Visits to Children's Homes

#### RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Commission notes the contents of this report.

#### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 requires Homes to be visited once a month by a representative of the Registered Provider who is not involved in the day to day management of the Home and a report of the visit to be written. This report summarises reports of visits between April and December 2004. 63 visits out of 69 were completed during this period, an improvement on previous years due to tighter monitoring.
- 2.2 Reports on Bute Walk Children's Home comment on staffing and management problems, poor physical conditions and poor child care in the early part of the year. Improvements are noted later in the year after temporary management arrangements had been made. The building was partially refurbished inside and there were plans to landscape the garden. The morale of staff and their interaction with children were seen to have improved, but sickness absence remained a problem.

"An OK place"

"I enjoyed being able to decorate my room"

(Comments by young people)

- 2.3 Coronation Avenue is described as homely, but also institutional from the outside, and shabby in places. Staff were found to be positive, friendly and enthusiastic, but around the middle of the year morale was low when there were control problems and the staff felt harshly criticised in an Inspection Report. Young people were frequently absent without permission, some were at risk of sexual exploitation and there was bullying. There were signs that these issues were being addressed later in the year but some young people continued to give concern.

“The two young people spoken to had very different views of the placement. One was happy with all aspects. The second was extremely unhappy, complaining of being bullied by another resident with staff being unable to intervene”

(July visitor)

“I spoke to three young people, one at length. They all seemed to have a relaxed relationship with staff and said they were happy living in this Children’s Home”

(December visitor)

- 2.4 Cricklewood Road Children’s Home was said to be in generally good condition but with some signs of wear and tear because repairs are not carried out quickly enough. The Home was calm and peaceful, with an open friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Staff were positive, warm, sensitive and child centred, and offered the children individual attention. Children appeared happy, confident and at ease, and enjoyed a good relationship with staff. Relations with the local community appeared to be much better.

“I was impressed to see children from the local area playing with children from the Home”

“The young person (who was leaving) had been taken out with all the other residents for a goodbye meal. Children had asked for this at a young person’s meeting. Staff told me it was a lovely evening”

(Two visitors)

- 2.5 The staff of Elmhurst were described as able and committed, their practice as sensitive and committed. They had a positive attitude, interacted well with young people, and tried hard to encourage them to take part in education and employment. There was a good system to encourage good behaviour and help young people to become independent. On the whole young people appeared content, although one thought there were too many rules. The environment was described as homely and an improvement on the previous Elmhurst building.

“Despite the moans about not having enough money for shopping, I was invited to share a pleasant and civilised lunch, with staff expecting good manners and young people showing consideration for each other-most of the time-just like in a family”

(Visitor)

2.6 Queensferry Gardens Children's Home is described as bright, welcoming and homely. Staff and young people all contribute to keeping it that way. It is described as a well run and comfortable home where staff take pride in their work and young people take part in the running of the Home. The children felt safe and happy and were glad to be there. Young people are positively encouraged to go to school and look after themselves. All are attending education, work or training of some kind. Older teenagers often stay out without permission and staff use various means to try and keep in touch with them.

"Young person said he felt safe and was happy. He was considering moving to independence but was ambivalent about this and wanted to stay as well. He said each of the young people had their own lives and went out a lot"

"One young person showed me the vegetable garden that staff and residents have created; they use the vegetables and salad at mealtimes. The youngster commented that they taste different as they were really fresh"

(Visitor)

"Not another person visiting"

(Young person)

2.7 Visitors to Redwood Unit observed that children had complex needs and challenging behaviour, requiring clear behaviour management strategies supported by other professionals. Good interaction between staff and children was observed but some children appeared not to be happy. They spoke of bullying, resented firm boundaries, and wanted better play equipment and more activities and outings. They did not like being restrained. Reasonable sanctions were used in response to behaviours such as damage to the building, barricades in bedrooms and solvent misuse. Sometimes activities were planned but had to be cancelled in response to behaviour or people being missing. Most had only limited education. The décor was described as functional but some of the bedrooms were in poor condition.

Towards the end of the year a change of resident group brought about a significant change for the better.

"A challenging group of boys whose emotional development is way behind their years"

"He would like a room where he could make private comments (as in the 'Big Brother' TV series). He was clearly not too enthusiastic about living at Moorfield"

"KS had been assaulted by a resident. However she commented on the excellent support she had received from her colleagues"

(Visitors)

2.8 Vicarage Road was described as pleasant on the inside but shabby outside, possibly due to plans for relocation. Visitors felt difficulties would increase if no maintenance was carried out between then and the date for closure. The Centre is described as extremely well run, the staff highly motivated but needing support with forthcoming changes. There was a book which recorded children's thoughts and ideas and helpful reminders of their likes and dislikes on files. One young person was there as a result of a fostering breakdown and was unhappy with this.

"I continue to be impressed by the quality of the care given and the support to families staff at the centre offer"

"On the day I visited the roof was leaking and buckets were placed in two rooms to catch the water"

(Visitors)

2.9 Staff on Wragley unit were described as working hard with a group of young people with diverse and high level needs. The views of young people varied according to their circumstances. Staff appeared to work hard to involve them in positive experiences and set boundaries in order to limit their involvement in inappropriate activities. Nevertheless one young person resented being physically restrained and did not feel listened to. Another was more positive about the centre and the support he had had moving out to a flat. The staff were keen to develop new strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour, and were looking forward to working with other professionals to achieve this. The unit needed decorating and some new furniture.

"The condition of the office is not conducive to staff morale. The staff have plans to redecorate themselves. However this should not be an expectation of the staff group"

"Staff were frustrated and felt other members of the department did not always hear them"

(Visitor)

<b>For more information contact:</b> K. Woodthorpe 422 6704
<b>Background papers:</b> None
<b>List of appendices:</b> Appendix 1 – Implications

## Appendix 1

### IMPLICATIONS

#### Financial

1.1 The cost of service for looked after children is a PAF indicator. Derby's costs are near the average for our comparator group of authorities.

## **Legal**

- 2.1 Regulation 33 visits are a legal requirement monitored by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

## **Personnel**

- 3.1 The responsibility for Regulation 33 visits is shared across Service Managers and above in Children's Services.

## **Equalities impact**

- 4.1 Standards require services to be provided which meet the needs of individuals arising from their gender, disability, religious, racial, cultural or linguistic background or sexual orientation. The Home is required to have appropriate policies and procedures and to provide training for staff on these issues.

## **Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 5.1 Children's Residential Care support the Council's objective of supporting and protecting people.