

## **Feedback from visit to Leicester Children's Homes**

### **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 On Thursday 28 March 2013 Councillors Bailey, Whitby and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer attended a visit to Leicester City Council to look at three of their residential children's homes.
- 1.2 This report summarises the findings from the visit.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 To note the report
- 2.2 To determine whether the Board wishes to make any recommendations to Council Cabinet based on the feedback from this visit.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 To share best practice between Local Authorities.

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 4.1 Following the Children and Young People Board's topic review into Derby City Council's children's homes Councillors Bailey and Whitby decided to visit Leicester City Council so that they could compare and contrast our services with the provision in Leicester.
- 4.2 Councillor Bailey and Whitby noted a number of issues that they felt would be useful in the development of new homes on the Moorfield's site and also across the service.
- 4.3 Three homes were visited. Two homes provided care for children with physical and learning disabilities and one home was a mainstream home.

- 4.4 The buildings were of a similar age to those in Derby at externally looked similar to the homes here.

#### 4.5 **Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture**

The following paragraphs focus on ideas for improving the fixtures, fittings and furniture in our homes

- 4.6 Many of the homes had en-suite facilities for all of the children. This provided the children with a greater level of privacy and made the homes feel less institutional as children could decorate their bathrooms as well as the bedrooms with their own personal belongings.
- 4.7 Councillors may wish to consider whether they want to recommend that the Cabinet Member and officers look at the feasibility of en-suite bathrooms in new homes initially in the development at Moorfields and in the future development of other homes.
- 4.8 Councillors Bailey and Whitby noted the homely feel of the kitchens in all of the houses visited. They felt less institutional than some of the homes in Derby. It was noted that to avoid new and costly regulations regarding extractor fans for gas hobs; Leicester had changed to using electric hobs. This enabled homes to keep the kitchens looking like a family kitchen and less like an industrial kitchen and was a cost saving for the Authority.
- 4.9 The Board may wish to consider a recommendation to Council Cabinet that the use of electric hobs be explored in Derby in the furnishing of new children's homes and to establish whether this would be beneficial/cost effective for our other homes.
- 4.10 The furniture in the Children's homes was a mix of furniture from high street stores and specialist companies. It was noted that Leicester had bought furniture from the company 'Tough Furniture' (<http://www.toughfurniture.com/>) and that many of the pieces bought 10 years ago were still in good working order and looked new. The initial outlay for the furniture was high however it had stood the test of time and extremely heavy use by residents. Residents and staff liked the furniture as it did not look institutional and worked well.
- 4.11 The Board may wish to make recommendations to the Cabinet Member regarding the exploration of suitable furniture for the new children's homes being built at Moorfields.

4.12 The homes all had a continuous development plan and any repairs were carried out immediately by the homes own dedicated team of maintenance staff.

4.13 **Thinking outside the box/Ethos of the service**

The following paragraphs discuss the ways in which staff at Leicester approached the challenges they faced and the ethos of the service in Leicester.

4.14 The message from the staff at Leicester was to be cheeky and haggle with suppliers when requesting equipment and when work was being done in the home. Any and every opportunity was taken to do this.

4.15 The homes looked for ways to work with the local community in the home. This included fund raising.

4.16 The service regularly rotated staff to meet the skills required in each home. This included rotations between staff in mainstream and staff in more specialised homes for children with physical and learning difficulties.

4.17 All of the spaces and rooms in the homes were used flexibly and were changed to meet the needs of the children coming into the home. The services for each child were very considerate of an individuals needs.

4.18 The strongest message from the day was the staffs 'can do' attitude. Nothing was too much trouble if it benefitted the child and their approach was like that of a parent fighting hard to get the best for their children.

4.19 Councillors Bailey and Whitby both saw great value in the approach taken by staff in Leicester. They felt staff owned the service and were extremely impressed by the culture and enthusiasm of the Head of Service and his team.

4.20 The Children and Young People Board's Topic Review makes several recommendations regarding development of the culture and ethos Derby City Council. The Board may wish to recommend that the Cabinet Member visits Leicester to see why a cultural shift is necessary at Derby.

<b>OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED</b>
---------------------------------

5.1 N/A

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer
---------------

<b>Financial officer</b> <b>Human Resources officer</b> <b>Estates/Property officer</b> <b>Service Director(s)</b> <b>Other(s)</b>	Phil O'Brian, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
<b>For more information contact:</b> <b>Background papers:</b> <b>List of appendices:</b>	Ellen Bird 01332 643646 ellen.bird@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
---------------------

**Financial and Value for Money**

1.1 N/A

**Legal**

2.1 N/A

**Personnel**

3.1 N/A

**Equalities Impact**

4.1 N/A

**Health and Safety**

5.1 N/A

**Environmental Sustainability**

6.1 N/A

**Property and Asset Management**

7.1 N/A

**Risk Management**

8.1 N/A

**Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 9.1
- Achieving their learning potential
  - Good health and well-being
  - Being safe and feeling safe
  - A strong community

- An active cultural life