

# **REPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENT VISITING SERVICE**

**April 2022 – September  
2022**

*Written by Regulation 44 visitors; Rachael Powis, Fiona Watters  
and Kim Murray*

## **Basis of report**

This report is being prepared to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update of the work undertaken by the Independent Visitors. This report covers the period from 01.04.2022 to 1.10.2022.

## **Introduction**

The Children's Homes Regulations 2015 (Part 6, Regulation 43) makes provision for the appointment of an Independent Visitor. There remains an expectation that the appointment of an Independent Visitor will continue to be the responsibility of the Local Authority, with clear guidance being offered as to the criteria, which must be met in terms of ensuring the visitor's independence. The visits continue to be a monthly requirement.

Within the regulations it is expected the Independent Visitor will report on the quality standards in specified areas. These can be summarised as follows:-

- (a) the quality and purpose of care standard (see regulation 6);
- (b) the children's views, wishes and feelings standard (see regulation 7);
- (c) the education standard (see regulation 8);
- (d) the enjoyment and achievement standard (see regulation 9);
- (e) the health and well-being standard (see regulation 10);
- (f) the positive relationships standard (see regulation 11);
- (g) the protection of children standard (see regulation 12);
- (h) the leadership and management standard (see regulation 13);
- (i) the care planning standard (see regulation 14).

The Independent Visitor continues to provide a report following each visit.

Overall, the Regulation 44 report has maintained its format, providing a succinct summary of the homes under the signs of safety headings, following each care standard being considered. There is also a section of recommendations to ensure there is clarity in prioritising areas for immediate action where these are identified during visits. The report format has been updated to include and reflect the Home's Managers' comments. This is to ensure the independent report is unchanged, but the

Home's Managers can provide additional information, context, or details on how any changes are being implemented.

### **The Independent Visitor**

Since April 2022, Regulation 44 visits have continued to be undertaken by three Independent Visitors: Kim Murray, Rachael Powis and Fiona Watters, who share the visiting duties to Lincolnshire County Council's seven residential homes and two supported living provisions. The semi-independent homes are in Grantham and Gainsborough and provide accommodation for young people aged 16 to 18 years old. These two homes previously accommodated young people for up to nine months however the homes' statements of purpose have been updated for young people to remain at the home for up to two years or until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Both homes are inspected under the Regulation 44 process every 4 months. This is currently not mandatory however the Local Authority commits to this as part of their quality assurance process.

The Independent Visitors have continued to maintain positive working relationships with residential home managers, staff, and young people.

As part of the visits, the Independent Visitor seeks feedback from key stakeholders including the young people, parents, social workers, health and education partners and other relevant individuals to gain a holistic view of the homes.

There has been no need to implement the dispute resolution procedure since the last report was completed.

### **Home Manager Updates**

Since April 2022 there have been several changes to the management of the homes. These are as follows:

#### **Albion Street**

The Home's Manager remains unchanged however the Assistant Manager has moved to The Beacon after being successful in securing a role as the Assistant Manager of this home. An RCO3 from Albion Street has been appointed as the Assistant Manager.

### **The Beacon**

The Home's Manager at The Beacon remains the same. The home has two Assistant Managers; one remains the same and as discussed above, the home has a new Assistant Manager, who was previously the Assistant Manager of Albion Street.

### **Eastgate**

The Home's Manager at Eastgate remains unchanged. The Assistant Manager has been successful in her application for Assistant Manager at Lincolnshire County Council's new residential home, Robin House. An RCO2 at Eastgate has been appointed as Assistant Manager at Eastgate.

### **Haven Cottage**

The Home's Manager has resigned from her post and is due to leave this position in November 2022. The Assistant Manager has been successful in her application for this post. The Assistant Manager post has not been recruited to at present. This post has been advertised.

### **Lincolnshire Secure Unit**

The Home's Manager is unchanged. Lincolnshire Secure Unit has three Assistant Managers. One of the Assistant Managers has now retired, and this position was replaced by two new Assistant Manager posts; two RCO3s from the unit were recruited to these positions.

### **Northolme**

In April 2022 the Assistant Manager of Northolme was acting as the Interim Home Manager; she has now been successful in securing this post. The Assistant Manager post was therefore advertised and an RCO3 has been successful in being appointed to this position.

### **Strut House**

Strut House's Registered Manager and Assistant Manager remain unchanged.

### **Rowston and Denton**

There have been no changes to the management structure of Rowston or Denton.

## The Voice of the Child

Across the homes there is continued evidence of the children's voices being captured. During visits, young people are consistently seen to be confident and articulate in expressing their views. In the homes for children with disabilities, there is evidence of staff using different communication methods to gather the children's views and wishes.

Each home is visited by the advocacy service. There has been evidence of this service being used to undertake specific pieces of work with children where their voice needs to be heard in relation to identified issues. The Regulation 44 visitors have seen evidence of children being encouraged to access this service and speak freely to their advocate. Details of the nominated children's advocate are displayed within the homes.

The homes continue to hold regular residents' meetings; in some homes these are known as "Chill and Chat" meetings. These are held weekly or monthly depending on the preference of the home. Young people are encouraged to participate in these meetings, and in some homes the young people are offered the opportunity to act as the chair of the meeting. The meetings enable the children to be involved in key decision making and have a say on developments/changes within the home. The children share their views on a range of topics including meal planning, activities, routines, boundaries and the impact of one another's behaviour within the home. Within these meetings, young people had identified that they had numerous, unknown visitors to their home. From this, "Pen Pictures" were developed to ensure the young people were aware of the names and roles of visitors to their home. There has been some evidence within homes of the meetings being developed to ensure that issues raised by the children, are responded to with a letter from the management, to discuss the points raised or requests made and how these will be addressed.

Where a child has had a Child in Care review consultation documents are consistently completed. Staff members will regularly complete direct work with children to ensure they are able to participate in their review and share their views. Young people are supported to attend their reviews and will often chose a member of staff they wish to attend with. Regulation 44 visitors gather feedback from the Independent Reviewing Officers as part of their visits.

Within some homes there are display boards that celebrate the children through 'Voice of the child', 'You said we did' or creative displays. There is also continued use of photographs to evidence the young people's input and some of the homes are using newsletters and monthly Junior Journals to share information.

Within the homes the young people have been observed to be confident in raising requests or issues they wish to discuss with the Homes' Managers and care staff. There appears to be an open-door

policy across the homes, where the children feel they can access staff at any time. In addition, there has been evidence of staff advocating for young people and sharing young people's views with management where required.

### Quality of care

The homes continue to deliver a good, and in some cases excellent, quality of care. There has been widespread evidence of staff members showing genuine investment in the individual needs of young people. Staff advocate for the children and ensure they have positive experiences. The homes ensure that children's interests and hobbies are followed, and they facilitate the children accessing community groups and activities. There is also evidence of young people being provided with safe, consistent, predictable care and routine, which is emotionally warm.

The homes demonstrate that they understand the children's individual needs and care plans. Risk assessments are regularly updated to reflect current risk. There have been many examples over the previous six months where the homes have been actively promoting independence in young people to support them in their next steps. This is specific to the child and has included examples such as young people walking to and from school or activities alone, shopping and budgeting, staying safe work, and increased free time in the community appropriate to the individual child's age and development.

Training remains a priority and staff report they can access this regularly. Some homes have training themes, for example, domestic abuse, during which there is a focus on this specific subject area. In addition, the homes have training matrixes to support staff in ensuring mandatory and non-mandatory training is up to date. Specialist training continues to be provided where required, for example, Strut House staff having in depth training on specific health needs of their young people.

All the homes have continued to participate in multi-agency partnership working, with health, police, schools, social care, and other agencies. Monthly risk management meetings continue to be held. The homes have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring the children regularly attend their education provisions and in cases where young people are not, this is proactively being addressed.

One of the most important priorities for young people is maintaining their sense of identity and links with their families and significant people in their lives. The homes continue to work with agencies and families to ensure family time is promoted wherever possible. Homes ensure that family times plans are followed and often take responsibility for facilitating children's time with their families. There is also excellent communication between homes where there are siblings residing in different settings

and responsibility for supervising family time is shared between the homes. There is continued evidence of homes working with children's families and ensuring good communication. Homes show realism in terms of children's plans and their connections with their families, understanding the likelihood of children returning to their family networks as they reach independence. Risk assessments are completed to ensure children have as much family time as possible and to promote the regularity of this wherever safe and appropriate.

### **Social Pedagogy and Direct Work**

Social pedagogy continues to be embedded across the homes and is used to support identified areas of work with young people. Social pedagogy assists the young people to engage in activities and conversations about the important things that have happened within their lives. It aims to make the connections between their 'hands', 'hearts' and 'head', supports social and emotional learning and develop resilience and social skills. Young people have direct work files and there is consistently evidence of work being completed with them around current risks, incidents, or concern.

New staff that join the teams continue to access the training and engage with support through the homes' social pedagogy champions to ensure that staff are confident in completing social pedagogy work and in using a variety of models.

Within some homes there are times (currently following the demanding summer holidays) when there are delays in social pedagogy and direct work being written up. Assurances have been offered that the work is ongoing however the delays are in recording this. In the homes where this is an issue, this is being addressed.

From 01.04.2022 the homes replaced the lengthy placement review documents with a Monthly Summary for each child. This change was across Lincolnshire County Council's residential homes (asides from Lincolnshire Secure Unit). This was to ensure there was unity across the homes. The Monthly Summary form was created between the homes, drawing on best practice, creating more condensed, targeted paperwork. The form identifies key risks and links these to a trajectory of work. The paperwork monitors the progress of the young people and provides a monthly reflection, acknowledging the young people's successes. The key worker reviews this each month and uses this in supervisions and team meetings to ensure the plan remains current and meet the needs of the child.

## **Education/Employment/Training (EET)**

At the last Corporate Parenting Board, board members requested that the Regulation 44 Inspectors seek to capture the numbers of young people in Education, Training or Employment across the residential estate. Inspectors have confirmed at the point they visit what the current educational status is of the young people within the home. Due to the wide variety of young people accessing provision the education provision can vary, for Strut House and Haven Cottage the young people attend on a short-term basis and the primary responsibility for education remains with parents. However, for both these homes, all young people on the days of inspection were in education.

Across the other homes there are instances where young people refuse to access education, either for the occasional day or slightly longer periods of time. In all instances it is clear from the inspections that the homes and involved professionals work tirelessly for and with young people to support them back into their education/training provision or identify and access alternatives where the provision is no longer suitable. This has meant that all but one young person has been accessing education or training over the course of the 6-month period. The one young person who has not been accessing education has been due to significant safeguarding concerns which is being robustly managed by all professional agencies, and in this instance, education has been available, and a new placement identified.

As the inspections for Rowston and Denton are 4 monthly there have been two inspections per home. In May Denton had both young people in EET and 4 out of 5 in ETT in September. For Rowston this was 1 out of 4 in and 1 out of 3 young people. From the inspections the Regulation 44 Officers have been able to see that the homes continue to seek to engage the young people in promoting and finding EET provision as well as working with leaving care and other professionals. This is reflected in the plans recorded for those young people and work done with them. Where young people are not in EET this is not due to lack of effort or ways of working by the homes, rather through lack of engagement, choices and challenges faced by these young people.

## **Challenges**

The most significant challenge across the homes continues to be staffing with this being especially relevant to the recruitment of new staff. It is recognised that this issue is not specific to Lincolnshire, with their being shortages of care staff nationally. Lincolnshire County Council continue to advertise for RCOs across the homes as opposed to advertising for specific positions at the individual setting. The homes have been creative in promoting roles by visiting local universities and presenting to students on social care courses about the positions and the progression opportunities available. There



has not been any evidence of shortfalls in staffing due to staff members being flexible in their shifts and management continuing to undertake shifts as required. Strut House has needed to reduce occupancy and on occasions, cancel care, to ensure that care continues to be safe.

As Lincolnshire County Council are preparing to open a new 4 bed residential home, Robin House, staff have been recruited for this home. Pending the home opening, the newly recruited staff have been able to support across the other homes. This has served to support staffing challenges within the homes but also as part of new staff's induction processes. This enables staff to have experiences across the different Lincolnshire County Council residential homes.

It is recognised that the homes face various challenges when working with children who have suffered significant trauma and adverse childhood experience. The children therefore understandably display challenging behaviours. Staff within homes are working to manage this daily by using a variety of strategies. These strategies are informed by training and multiagency working. While homes are evidencing their abilities to manage these behaviours, and ensure children are safeguarded, it is recognised that this impacts on staff and young people's emotional wellbeing.

### **Conclusion**

Across the homes the Regulation 44 visitors have seen evidence of excellent care being provided to the children. The relationships between the young people and their carers have been observed to be caring and respectful. All homes are currently Ofsted rated as Good or Outstanding. While this has not always been the case, it reflects the work that homes have undertaken to ensure that good standards of care, or better, are being afforded to the children residing in Lincolnshire County Council's residential homes. There continues to be issues with staffing across many of the homes, but these shortages are being managed by the flexibility and commitment of staff.

The staff teams have worked tirelessly with the young people and their families to maintain their links and attachments to their family networks, and this has been evidenced in the creative ways that family time has been promoted.

During this period there has been evidence of significant joint working between the homes. The management teams meet regularly and work to create consistency across the homes. Best practice and ideas are shared, and the team offer support to one another. Peer audits are being completed by the managers, providing an opportunity for critical reflection and constructive feedback.

All the regulation 44 visits have concluded that each home continues to safeguard the children in their care and promote their wellbeing as defined by Regulation 44.4 (a) & (b).

## APPENDIX A

### Ofsted inspections

All the children's homes are subject to Ofsted inspections. Each home has twice yearly inspections, ordinarily there will be a full inspection annually followed by an interim inspection approximately six months later.

#### Albion Street

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 April 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, Good**

*taking into account,*

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

#### The Beacon

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 September 2021

**Overall experiences and progress of the children and young people, Good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected, **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers, **Good**

**Requirements:**

<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to children’s risk assessments, and ensuring that they contain all known and relevant risk factors and are regularly updated to identify risk management measures.</p>	<p>1 December 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>This relates to staff receiving regular formal supervision.</p>	<p>1 January 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure;</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.(Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))</p>	<p>1 December 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; and are kept up to date.(Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))</p>	<p>1 December 2021</p>

Ofsted Recommendations:

- The registered person should ensure that recruitment processes safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. Guide to the children’s home’s regulations including the quality standards ”, page 61, paragraph
- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted is notified of any incident relating to the protection, safeguarding and welfare of a child living in the home including any allegation of harm made against staff. Guide to the children s home s regulations including the quality standards ”, page 63, paragraph 14.10)

The above recommendations have been discussed with the Registered Home Manager previously and an action plan has been put forward and agreed by senior managers to address the areas identified by Ofsted during the visit.

### Eastgate

**Current Ofsted rating of the home from the last inspection: Outstanding**

Inspection dates: **22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022**

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, **Outstanding**

taking into account;

*How well children and young people are helped and protected* **Outstanding**

*The effectiveness of leaders and managers* **Outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standard of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improve outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Enforcement action since last inspection: **None**

### Haven Cottage

**Inspection dates: 9 and 10 May 2022**

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **Good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

### Lincolnshire Secure Unit

Current OFSTED Rating of the Home from the last full inspection: Good (16-18 Nov 21)

## Assurance Inspection Visit 28th June 2022

Information about this inspection At these inspections, the inspector(s) evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers. Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'

### Recommendations

- The registered person should develop communal living areas to make them feel more homely as is safely possible. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- Healthcare professionals work closely with staff across the secure setting in caring for children to achieve the best possible health outcomes. In particular leaders and managers should facilitate sufficient accommodation to enable health care professionals to work alongside care staff, in order to assess and meet children's health needs. (Healthcare Standards for Children and Young People in secure settings, June 2019, page 12, paragraph 1.3.2)
- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that children receive impartial careers guidance to help them to prepare for their next steps in education, employment or training. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that the starting points and learning support needs of children are identified accurately and in a timely way, when they arrive at the home. Staff should use this information to plan interesting and challenging learning activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should recruit staff so that the home can offer a full, balanced curriculum. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)

### Full Inspection Visit

Visit dates: 16th -18th November 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, Good

Taking into account

Children's education and learning      Requires improvement to be good

Children's health      Good

How well children and young people are helped and protected      Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement      Due date

The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—

helps children aspire to fulfil their potential.

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(2))

In particular, the registered person should ensure that children's participation in education is promoted and that leaders and managers have effective oversight of this.

10 January 2022

Recommendations

■ Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, ensure that the quality of records relating to group work and direct work with children is improved. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

■ The registered person should ensure that any placing authority provides complete and current plans for each child, including care plans and personal education plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.5)

■ The registered person should ensure that children are encouraged by staff to see the home's records as 'living documents', supporting them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. In particular, ensure that children's views are recorded in their care and support plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)

■ Healthcare professionals work closely with staff across the secure setting in caring for children to achieve the best possible health outcomes. In particular, leaders and managers should facilitate

sufficient accommodation to enable healthcare professionals to work alongside care staff, in order to effectively meet children’s health needs. (‘Healthcare Standards for Children and Young People in secure settings June2019’,page 12,paragraph 1.3.2)

■ The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that children receive impartial careers guidance to help them to prepare for their next steps in education, employment, or training. This recommendation is repeated from the full inspection November 2020 (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations, including the quality standards’, page 29, paragraph 5.18)

■ The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that the starting points and learning support the needs of children are identified accurately and in a timely way when they arrive at the home. Staff should use this information to plan interesting and challenging learning activities.(‘Guide to the children’s regulations, including the quality standards’, page 29, paragraph 5.18)

■ The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should recruit staff so that the home can offer a full, balanced curriculum. (‘Guide to the children’s regulations, including the quality standards’, page 29, paragraph 5.18)

**Northolme**

**Last Ofsted inspection dates:** 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people:** **Good**

Taking into account,

How well children and young people are helped and protected: **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: **Good**

The children’s home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	17 January 2022

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to the safe storage of potential hazards in the home and ensuring that cigarette lighting materials are removed</p>	
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**Strut House**

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2021

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, Outstanding**

*taking into account,*

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Outstanding**

The children’s home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children’s home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 6 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: **Outstanding**

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Due date</b>
<p>The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to management oversight of the use of restraint, staff and child debriefs and evaluation of incidents involving the use of restraint.</p>	<p>1 January 2022</p>

Action plan from last Ofsted inspections: **No action plan**