



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	09 November 2023
Subject:	Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report

Summary:

This report is the six-monthly report on the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service. It serves to update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the work undertaken between April and October 2023.

Actions Required:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the six-monthly report on the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service and seek assurance that the Independent Visitors are fulfilling their obligations in visiting the Local Authority homes each month as required and inspecting against the nine quality standards as outlined in Part six, regulation 43 of the Children's Home Regulation 2015.

1. Background

This report is being prepared in order to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update of the work of the Independent Visitor.

Part six, regulation 43 of the Children's Home Regulation 2015 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 is clearly demonstrable. The visits continue to be required to be made on a monthly basis.

The Independent Visitor continues to be expected to provide a report following each visit. Part six, regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations provides for the reporting of the standards.

The Regulation 44 report maintained its format providing a succinct summary of the homes under the signs of safety headings and there remains the inclusion of the

recommendations section to ensure there is clarity in prioritising areas for immediate action where these are identified during visits.

The Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Officers are within the Quality and Standards Service and are Local Authority Designated Officers. During this period of reporting, the duties have been exercised by three Independent Visitors who have shared the duties across the seven Local Authority homes and two Independent schemes.

The attached report therefore details the homes performance against the standards and provides an overview of how the standards are being met. A particular focus is given to the way in which the Local Authority has adapted its practice and safeguarded young people during the on-going Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Conclusion

There is evidence of ongoing high-quality care being observed by the Independent Visitors. Observations of the relationships between the care staff and the young people is positive across all homes, and the young people will search out staff for support and reassurance. There is very much an open door policy within the homes. The staff are seen to be invested in the relationships with the young people to ensure positive experiences and outcomes.

There are a variety of ratings from Ofsted across the homes. The Outstanding inspection relating to Albion Street should be celebrated and is reflective of continuous hard work and dedication, from all the staff. The Requires Improvement rating for Northolme is being addressed, the management team and care staff have met the challenge head on and are working creatively to address the issues. The Independent Visitor has seen an improvement in the case files and recordings.

In the inspections, the Independent Visitor must specifically confirm whether the two elements are met:

- Regulation 44.4 (a) the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded.

And

- Regulation 44.4 (b) the independent person's opinion as to whether the conduct of the home promotes Children's wellbeing.

In all homes at all visits the Independent Visitor has confidently stated that both these requirements are being met.

The much awaited opening of Robin House is seen as an exciting opportunity to develop the therapeutic parenting model within the Local Authority, with the aim being to move the young people either back to family or into a foster placement. It is obviously early days

for the home and the young people accessing it, however the enthusiasm of the staff is positive.

There continues to be issues with staffing across many of the homes. Whilst these shortages are being managed by the flexibility and commitment of the management team and the care staff, retention of staff is a major issue that the senior management team are looking to resolve.

There continues to be joint working across the homes with regular peer audits being completed by the management teams. This enables reflection and constructive feedback. It also enables a learning culture as to new ways of working and positive practices across the homes.

Management audits continue to take place regularly within the homes, therefore providing management oversight and guidance.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report – April - October 2023

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Carolyn Knight, who can be contacted on 07879603618 or Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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