



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

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| Report to: | Corporate Parenting Panel |
| Date: | 11 November 2021 |
| Subject: | Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service Report 1st April–30th September 2021 |

Summary:

This report introduces the 6 monthly Report on the inspection of the Local Authority Childrens Homes by the Independent Visitors. This is a statutory requirement and serves to update the Corporate Parenting Panel on how the Care Standards are met within these homes in Lincolnshire.

Actions required:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the 6 Monthly Report on the Residential Childrens Homes to ensure they meet the Care Standards and needs of the resident children and young people.

1. Background

Part six, regulation 43 of the Children's Home Regulation 2015 makes provision for the appointment of an Independent Visitor. Independent Visitor Inspections seek to demonstrate how each children's home meets the Quality standards for children's homes [Children Homes Regulations 2015 (Part 2)]. 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.

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 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. Included in the reports are sections highlighting "What's working well", "What are we worried about" and "Recommendations". Each report also contains a response to the report by the Home Manager.

Each visit has been conducted in light of COVID advice and guidance, however the Independent Visitors have continued to visit in person unless restrictions/COVID outbreaks have not allowed this.

They continue to speak to children, staff, Managers, external professionals and parents in order to compile the monthly reports as well as review all appropriate documents.

2. Conclusion

Overall, the homes continue to provide good, if not in some instances exceptional, levels of care for the young people in their homes. There have been further concerns raised over the quality of care and leadership at Albion Street and the Local Authority are working proactively to manage this and make the necessary improvements.

The Registered Managers are actively promoting multi-agency working and supporting each other to ensure the physical and emotional safety of welfare of the children in their care with positive feedback of their experiences.

The voice of the young people continues to be valued, strived for and promoted being gathered in various methods to ensure they are happy with the care they are being provided. There continues to be extensive promotion to the young people's joy and achievement, by promoting activities in the home as well as the community, a lot of which also support the young people in developing healthy lifestyles.

Some of the homes continue to face challenges in respect of staffing however the good will and flexibility of staff has positively supported the care of the young people particularly during times of isolation and COVID cases which, despite the health and safety concerns, have overall been managed well and robustly.

Each of the individual homes has undertaken some levels of recruitment to fill vacant posts. One thing that has been clear that the service as a whole has pulled together through secondments and acting up roles to ensure key positions have been filled and continuity of care is maintained.

There remain on-going developments across the residential estate in respect of social pedagogy and restorative practice and there is evidence of sharing of skills across practitioners who are coaching less able and developing colleagues. Staff members have been responsive to these opportunities and have embraced these. Independent Visitors have seen first-hand the motivation and commitment across the homes by staff members that have worked in challenging conditions, but nevertheless have continued to go above and beyond to provide the best care and stability they can to the young people.

The staff teams have worked tirelessly with the young people and their families to maintain their links and attachments, and this has been evidenced in the creative way that family time has been promoted through range of safe opportunities.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

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| These are listed below and attached at the back of the report | |
| Appendix A | Report for the Independent Visiting Service May 2021 – October 2021 |

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, Head of Service Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker, who can be contacted on Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk, or 0152253732.

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