

18 January 2016

Agenda Item: 8

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**ROTA VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES: AUTUMN 2015****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform the Committee of the outcome of six-monthly rota visits to Nottinghamshire County Council's children's homes that took place in Autumn 2015. Recommendations are made by Councillors when they visit and officers act on any recommendations that are made.

Information and Advice

2. **Lyndene** was visited on 2 December 2015 by Councillor Colleen Harwood. She noted that the home was awaiting completion of the garden office following changes to the interior of the home going from the provision of 3 beds to 4. She commented that the home is welcoming and has a homely feel about it, and that the staff team have a great desire to see young people feel secure and achieve their full potential. There were two recommendations:

- The Summer break system requires looking into to ensure it meets the needs of the residents

The manager and staff team ensure they consult with young people about where they would like to go on their summer holidays. Young people are offered single days out, for example, to go to the sea side, visit an activity centre, theme park or something else of their choice. They are also offered longer breaks away from the home, possibly long weekends, or a full week, again at the sea side, holiday camp or an adventure park for example.

- Suggestions of a suitable break facility may require further investigation. This could be used across the County and would benefit many homes and families

The staff in the home strive to provide individualised holiday breaks for the young people, whereby they can view themselves and their holiday experiences as if they were on holiday with their family, and perhaps not with other young people who are in care.

3. **Caudwell House** was visited on 12 November 2015 by Councillor Boyd Elliott. During the visit he noted that the home was extremely welcoming, warm and very friendly. He also noted that the staff personalise bedrooms for the young people, with one of the

rooms described as amazing following it being newly decorated and fully sensorized. He noted that education is taken very seriously, all the young people are encouraged to learn new activities and carers respond to the individual needs, making children as comfortable as possible. He also commented on morale being exceptionally good, following on from their Outstanding rating from an Ofsted full inspection. There was one recommendation:

- *Council to commend the home with some sort of achievement award.*

4. **Minster View** was visited by Councillor Boyd Elliott on 12 November 2015. He noted that the house was safe, warm and extremely welcoming, with the security door having been fixed. Councillor Elliott documented that relationships between staff and carers is very positive and young people are supported on leisure activities. The security door needs investigating. There was one recommendation made:

- The new way of advertising a position for a staff vacancy is not ideal. Before a position could be advertised simply after a conversation with the Director of Children's Services, now with the new scheme it is as a result of some 13 e mails

It is understood that this example given was an unusual one. It occurred during the changeover from one recruitment electronic system to another, and it is not anticipated that this will re-occur.

5. **Oakhurst** was visited by Councillor Colleen Harwood on 14 December 2015. She noted that the home, both externally and interior is clean, welcoming, safe and well maintained. Robust procedures are in place for responding to any missing episode and individualised care plans address behaviour management. Staff support age appropriate friendships, and family contact. There were no recommendations made.

6. **West View** was visited on 18 November 2015 by Councillor Philip Owen. He noted that externally the building and grounds show a reflection of the work put into maintenance of the home and commented on the positive working relationships with Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). No young people have been reported missing since the last rota visit, and the home was rated as Good in a recent full Ofsted inspection. There was one recommendation:

- Internal refurbishment/decoration needs to be done immediately.

This has now begun, with work on the lounge started. Plans for refurbishment of other rooms are now in place, which we anticipate will be finished in February. .

7. **The Big House** (new building) was visited by Councillor Jacky Williams on 29 October 2015. She commented on the success of the new building, describing it as being light, airy with a calming and peaceful ambience, which is having a positive impact on the young people. She noted that staff have done a considerable amount of preparation work with the young people and their families to make the move as smooth a transition as possible. Councillor Williams recorded that she felt it is a really impressive facility which the Council should be proud of. She also recorded recognition of a new service being offered at the home whereby parents and carers who are not accessing short breaks at the home, can come and experience play sessions using the equipment and facilities of

the home encouraging support networks for families of children with disabilities. There were no recommendations made.

8. **Clayfields House** was visited on 24 November 2015 by Councillor Jacky Williams. She noted that the new reception area creates a separate space. It was recognised that Scarlet unit is in a poor state with evidence of subsidence and structural damage, and this is awaiting planning application approval to rectify. Councillor Williams recorded that she had spoken to young people, one who commented that Clayfields House “felt to be a safe place and not somewhere anyone would want to harm themselves”, and another young person who demonstrated a strong bond with the manager and staff who are working with her. The education team has recently established that 70% of the young people admitted into Clayfields have a learning disability that is being diagnosed within the establishment such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or dyscalcula. Technology with the unit enables young people to move to a higher educational level, following recognition of their learning disabilities. There were three recommendations made:

- I fully support the proposed refurbishment of the Scarlet wing, which could help to ensure longer viability of the unit.
- There is the potential for some research on the extent of learning disabilities diagnosed within the establishment and the impact of the diagnosis.

This is being looked at within the senior management team of Clayfields House.

- There is the potential for the virtual school to look closely at some of the achievements and to consider funding some of the assisted technology required

This is being explored by the senior management team at Clayfields with education colleagues.

Other Options Considered

9. As this is a report for noting, it is not necessary to consider other options.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

10. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the outcome of the six-monthly rota visits to Nottinghamshire County Council's children's homes that took place in Autumn 2015 be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

12. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (SS 16/12/15)

13. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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