

9 February 2015

Agenda Item: 11

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**ROTA VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES: OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2014****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 October and November 2014. Recommendations are made by Councillors when they visit and officers act on any recommendations that are made.

Information and Advice

2. **Lyndene** – a report is not yet available on the visit to this home
3. **Caudwell House** was visited on 27 November 2014 by Councillors Boyd Elliott and Sue Saddington. During the visit, they noted that, as with previous visits, the building was well maintained and extremely welcoming with a secure entrance and signing in procedure. There was no work in progress and nothing due to be carried out. They noted that child protection is taken extremely seriously and responded to in a daily logging system where any incidents are logged and reported to shift managers. They noted that each young person has an individual care plan to meet their specific needs. Cllrs Saddington and Elliott made one recommendation:

- Improved communication between the home and County Council with regards to the future 'security of the Home', obviously this is difficult in today's economic climate. The staff know this and are not naïve enough to think all is good, but would just like more dialogue.

This comment has been passed on to senior managers in the County Council to ensure that staff are kept informed about any potential changes once decisions are made.

4. **Minster View** – a report is not yet available on the visit to this home
5. **Oakhurst** was visited by Councillor Colleen Harwood on 3 November 2014. She noted that the external works on the roof were being completed as part of planned maintenance, that the interior looked fresh and clean and welcoming and that the downstairs bathroom was being refurbished at last. She commented positively on the young people's engagement in education, decision making processes and independent living skills. Councillor Harwood made one recommendation:

- That the wi-fi be updated and inclusive in the home at the earliest opportunity to allow residents the opportunity to do their homework/college work safely.

Work is underway to secure the services of a provider who will ensure that young people are properly safeguarded.

6. **West View** was visited on 11 November 2014 by Councillor Philip Owen. He noted that external works to the garden and the patio had been carried out and that this had greatly improved the aspect. There was still some refurbishment outstanding. He noted too that the working relationship with CAMHS had greatly improved and that engagement with activities in the community was actively encouraged for young people. However ‘transfer from children’s to adult social care is not as seamless as it should be’. Councillor Owen made two recommendations:

- Complete the outstanding refurbishment work as quickly as possible

There is a work schedule for this and the need for speed in completing this is noted.

- Determine whether the conversion of the games room into independent living units is to go ahead, as quickly as possible.

There is currently a consultation exercise being carried out relating to the proposal about the conversion. A risk impact assessment will inform the final decision about whether and when this will be carried out.

7. **The Big House** was visited by Councillor Jacky Williams on 27 October 2014 and Councillor Liz Plant on 6 November 2014. There were two separate reports following the visits. They both noted the physical condition of the current Big House but also both noted that the new-build Big House will open later in 2015. Councillor Plant also commented on the excellent all-purpose play area. Councillor Williams noted that there were children enjoying a period of respite when she visited – she enjoyed the ‘feel’ of the Big House when young people were present. She observed that the kitchen budget had been increased since her last visit and staff were able to offer a variety of healthy foods, often with the intention of assisting the child’s behavioural problems. There were no young people present at the time that Councillor Plant visited. Councillor Plant commented on the variety of activities that young people were supported to engage with including swimming, horse-riding, bowling, go-karting as well as shopping excursions to help them to learn the value of money. Councillor Plant made no recommendations. Councillor Williams recommended:

- Increasing the budget for furnishings, fixtures and fittings for the new build if possible or assist with fund raising exercise.

There is no additional funding for the new build but the point about fund raising exercises or possibly applying for grants will be further explored.

8. **Clayfields House** was visited on 13 November 2014 by Councillor Jacky Williams. She noted that a considerable amount of building work is being undertaken with a new reception area and office suite under construction and that the new workshop/vocational

centre area is completed and has opened as a social enterprise, with use by both residents and a local school. She was impressed by the variety of the food available and the way it was being served. Councillor Williams found the arrangements for young people were working well. Councillor Williams observed that transition planning plays a key role, with staff taking an interest in young people beyond their departure from Clayfields. Indeed several young people have been found accommodation in the locality so that they can return to Clayfields to complete their education. Councillor Williams made two recommendations:

- I would like to see the refurbishment of the Scarlet unit take place as soon as possible.

Scarlet unit needs to be demolished and rebuilt as it is subject to subsidence. The DfE will fund a rebuild if they have sufficient funds to do so and there are plans in place to do a viability/design study in the next financial year followed by a rebuild provided the funds from the DfE are forthcoming.

- This authority should do what it can to secure the long term viability of this unit which appears to serve this particular group of young people to the very best of its ability and provides credibility and respect for both the staff and the authority.

Nottinghamshire County Council continues to support the work carried out at Clayfields House and manages the developments at the unit. Clearly there is a broader national and political context in which major changes are being proposed to the secure estate for young people. The County Council continues to believe that the high quality work carried out at Clayfields for young people secured through the Youth Justice system and those secured through the 'welfare' route should be valued and supported going forward.

9. **Additional visits.**

A rota system for visits to independent children's homes where Nottinghamshire Looked after Children are placed is being established. Over the next few weeks briefings will be arranged for residential providers of children's homes and for Members with a view to the new rotas starting from April 2014.

Options Considered

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

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. 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 October and November 2014 be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

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

Financial Comments (SS 23/01/15)

14. 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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