



**24 January 2023**

**Agenda Item 8**

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES**

### **STAFFING IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides an update on the staffing position in Nottinghamshire children's residential homes.

#### **Information**

2. There are seven internal children's residential homes in Nottinghamshire comprising three providing for children with disability, three mainstream homes and one secure home.
3. The current children's disability homes are Caudwell House and The Big House, although there are plans agreed to convert West View to become a specialist disability home in the future.
  - **Caudwell House (Southwell)** is a 12 bedded home, with either 4 resident beds and 8 short break beds or 5 resident and 7 short break beds dependent on demand at the time of need. It provides residential care for children with physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties and health care needs, and children with learning difficulties and on the autistic spectrum. The home may provide care and accommodation for no more than 12 children from the age of 10 to 18 years. Caudwell House is rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted.
  - **The Big House** is a short break home in the village of Edwinstowe. At present the home provides overnight breaks for 27 children. Each child has a bespoke package of care ranging from 24 nights a year to 156 nights a year. Allocation is dependent on need and is subject to change dependent on the changing needs of the children. Any child attending The Big House will have a severe intellectual disability, combined with manifestations of challenging and complex behaviour. Children must be of school age, attend their own school and can be up to 18 years of age. The child is expected to be mobile, but provision will be made for those who have some degree of difficulty with mobility. The Big House is rated as 'good' by Ofsted.
4. The three mainstream homes are Lyndene, Oakhurst and West View, all of which are currently rated as 'good' by Ofsted. West View is currently closed as a consequence of a

flood and the subsequent need for asbestos surveys before repairs can be completed. The staff at West View have been relocated to other homes pending the refurbishment and/ or the opening of new provision.

5. The mainstream homes accommodate children because they are unable to live at home or with other family members or carers. A range of care is provided for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties with or without moderate learning disabilities.
6. Clayfields Secure Children's Home is a national resource providing Secure Care for up to 20 vulnerable young people between 10 and 18 years of age. Within the centre, a total of 20 places are available for purchase by the Ministry of Justice, for children on remand or sentenced to custody and for local authorities under Section 25 of the Children Act, for example, when children frequently abscond from care, are at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation or are involved in gang activity.

## **Staffing**

7. As is the case across much of the care sector at present there are significant challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff within the children's homes. Gaps in operational rotas are being filled by relief staff, agency staff and permanent staff taking on additional shifts and managers undertaking shifts. Some of the pressures have been eased by the redeployment of staff into other homes, for example, due to the temporary situation at West View. However, this does not fully resolve the problem of recruitment and retention that the homes are experiencing which have become more acute following the Coronavirus pandemic.
8. The annual report of the His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education Children Services and Skills 2021/2022 highlighted the fact that staffing issues in children's social care are not new, but problems with recruiting and retaining staff are arguably the biggest challenge the sector currently faces. The report highlights the problems with recruiting and retaining social care workers which are particularly apparent in children's homes reporting that:

*"Staff vacancies, particularly for children's home managers, continue to affect the quality of care. Staff turnover is also very high.*

*Vacancies for registered managers have increased from 9% in August 2019 to 14% in August 2022. Around a third (32%) of all children's homes had a manager who was new in post (started on or after 1 September 2021) as at 31 August 2022. However, in the 10 largest provider groups, the percentage of homes with newly appointed managers was slightly lower (29%).*

*In the year to March 2022, 35% of permanent care staff in children's homes left their role. In the same period, 44% of permanent care staff were newly hired. This was similar to 2019–20, the most recent year for which there is comparable data."*

## **Vacancy position in Nottinghamshire**

9. A snapshot of the vacancy position on 15 December 2022 is detailed below. It shows the challenges across a range of care and other supporting roles.

Home	Vacancy
<b>Caudwell House</b> Full Establishment: 48.5 FTE Vacancy rate: 12% 6% VLT	1 Residential Social Care Worker (RSCW) 2 Residential Care Worker (RCW) Cook vacancy 27 hours Half night care post Full-time Occupational Therapy post
<b>The Big House</b> Full Establishment: 27.6 FTE Vacancy rate: 18% 6% VLT	3 Full-time RSCW 1 24-hour RCW Part time cook vacancy
<b>Lyndene</b> Full Establishment: 14.6 FTE Vacancy rate: 21% 6% VLT	3 Full-time RCWs
<b>West View</b> Full Establishment: 14.6 FTE Vacancy rate: 68% 6% VLT	5 RSCW vacancies 3 RCWs 2 Night care post
<b>Oakhurst</b> Full Establishment: 15.1 FTE Vacancy rate: 23% 6% VLT	1 Full-time RCW 2 Full-time RSCWs Half night care post awake
<b>Clayfields</b> Full Establishment: 100.8 FTE Vacancy rate: 14% 6% VLT	1 Practitioner (1 candidate currently going through safer recruitment checks) 9 Assistant Practitioners (2 candidates currently going through safer recruitment checks) 0.4 FTE Mechanics trainer (going out for the third time) 1 FTE Teaching Assistant (6 months) (going out for the third time) 2 Intervention Workers

10. Recruitment challenges are not confined to Nottinghamshire but are a national issue and local authorities are competing with each other to attract and recruit experience from a small pool. Staffing shortages across the residential homes can result in staff becoming fatigued from working long hours and this risks increased sickness rates. Covering shifts with relief or agency staff also means that the strong relationships between children and staff are not as consistent as would be preferred.
11. Managers need to ensure that homes are being run effectively and safely. At times they are working operational shifts which takes them away from completing their management and leadership tasks, particularly the oversight of practice in the homes, quality assurance

of the work completed with children and ensuring that staff are appropriately supervised and supported. Safe staffing levels are imperative not only on a practical level but also in relation to the regulatory requirements set by Ofsted. Gaps in staffing have the potential to negatively impact on outcomes for children as planned key work, taking children out on activities, and building effective and meaningful relationships with children are at risk of not taking place. These are being managed well at present but if all homes were occupying at full capacity this would be a significant concern.

12. As outlined above recruitment and retention is a significant challenge in social care, even more so for services in the secure setting such as Clayfields where resilience of staff is a key element in dealing with young people who can be both extremely vulnerable and physically and emotionally challenging. Talented and motivated staff can gain career progression quickly in these settings but attracting the right skills and experience into operational care roles in Clayfields is difficult; there are currently 12 care positions unfilled.
13. As part of the residential service workforce development plan, work is underway to develop a recruitment and retention strategy focussing on what works well and what needs to be done differently in order to attract and retain staff, including a defined career pathway. This work will be supported by colleagues in the workforce development and communication departments. One of the findings was that when it came to advertising job openings the most successful methods cited by employers were:
  - a) employees referring friends (49%)
  - b) adverts posted on their own websites (29%)
  - c) adverts in local newspaper (20%)
  - d) social media adverts (17%).
14. Taking this data into consideration alongside other findings, some immediate actions were taken and an action plan drawn up with immediate short, medium and long-term goals including:
  - rolling adverts
  - revamping of adverts to make them more prominent, more attractive, and easy to access with added links from other domains to the residential page
  - shortening the response to advert process from the time an application is received to contacting the prospective candidate
  - prospective candidates having a manager's name who will keep in regular touch with them prior to interview
  - increasing use of social media
  - regularly reviewing existing remuneration packages and benefits schemes to ensure Nottinghamshire is competitive with other councils
  - ensuring employee benefits offered by Children and Families Services are up to date and appropriately advertised to external candidates
  - attendance at universities and job fairs.
15. Terms and conditions are already competitive when compared with the independent sector, although the ability to flex wages in relation to workforce and market demand can lead to transience in the workforce. In addition, to consider remuneration, staff wellbeing and the development of a career pathway are identified as priority issues. The service is

considering possible future structures that would create a pathway that enables staff to be ready for promotion opportunities.

16. From exit interviews and consultation with staff it has been identified that the professionalisation, through the requirement to engage in study and professional development, and increased focus on regulation and care standards has been challenging for some long-term members of staff who originally worked in a very different culture. The criteria used for recruitment and appointment sought candidates who had an interest in working with children and had knowledge around childcare, and the entry into residential care was not as focused on qualifications as it is today. New legislation and Ofsted requirements require staff to achieve Level 3 diploma within two years of appointment. A significant number of staff entered the service with little to no qualifications and have found it challenging to achieve the necessary qualification for academic and work pressure reasons and some have left the profession as a consequence. It has also had an impact on those who might have traditionally been attracted to such roles. Other factors identified which have been noted to provide a barrier to recruitment and retention is the increase in intimate personal care and pseudo-clinical tasks previously completed by staff from health, working hours and the intensity of the role, and travel which is inherent to the role.
17. An objective view confirms that increasing numbers of children who have complex needs are entering the care system and those in residential care are in general those with some of the highest levels of need, certainly until they can establish relationships with staff teams. This can mean that at times working environments can be stressful, particularly for less experienced staff. The Council has a strong package of wellbeing support and good adherence to health and safety to try and reduce the impact of stress and the emotional and physical impact that can come from the work.
18. There is confidence that the action plan that is in place and the actions already taken will help to achieve the ambition to attract the right number and quality of staff, resulting in the homes being an attractive place to work, being considered a good career move, and for staff to remain in Nottinghamshire.

### **Other Options Considered**

19. Not applicable as this report represents an outline of the current position of staffing in residential homes.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

20. The report provides an opportunity for the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below.

Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

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

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the information contained in the report.

**Laurence Jones**  
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### **Constitutional Comments (GR 29/12/22)**

23. Pursuant to the Nottinghamshire County Council Constitution the Corporate Parenting Panel has the authority to receive this report and note the recommendations contained within it.

### **Financial Comments (CDS 03/01/2023)**

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

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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