

**11 February 2019****Agenda Item: 17****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL  
WORK****ROTA VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES: AUTUMN 2018****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 2018. Recommendations are made by Councillors when they visit and officers act on any recommendations that are made.

**Information**

2. Rota visits are carried out twice a year by Members and reports on the findings of the visits are taken to the Children & Young People's Committee. These visits are in addition to statutory Regulation 44 visits, which the Council must commission to take place monthly by an independent person with no involvement in the children's home and regular inspections by Ofsted.

**Rota visits - Autumn 2018**

3. **West View** was visited on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018 by Councillor Boyd Elliott. On the day the visit took place several staff and young people had contracted a sickness bug. This resulted in Councillor Elliott not having contact with any of the young people during this visit as safety and illness reduction measures were in place. It was noted that the team were supporting one young person with challenging behaviour.

**There was one recommendation:**

- More support on alternative provision for young person presenting challenging behaviour if possible.

*Action: Multi-agency support is being provided to the young person; this support is continually being reviewed to ensure that his needs are being met.*

4. **Lyndene** was visited on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018 by Councillor John Peck. Councillor Peck described the overall appearance of Lyndene as homely and well cared for with any damage repaired, sometimes with the assistance of the young people. He commented that the staff are working extremely hard to give young people lots of encouragement, building their self-

esteem and giving them every opportunity to succeed. A lot of work goes into developing their understanding of staying safe.

Councillor Peck noted in his summary that he was very impressed by the dedication and hard work of the management team and their staff. Two recent staff appointments had been made and a new handyperson had been appointed since his last visit and he noted the limited use of agency staff. Councillor Peck referenced Lyndene's last Ofsted report (July 2018) which is good overall with the effectiveness of leaders and managers rated as Outstanding. Councillor Peck noted that this was a well-deserved recognition of all the hard work and dedication which the team at Lyndene bring to their work with the children in their care.

**There were no recommendations and actions from the previous visit had been addressed.**

5. **The Big House** was visited on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2018 by Councillor Errol Henry. There was one young person in the home during this visit however due to the young person requiring individual support from care workers it was not possible for her to be spoken with. The other young people were on a trip to the seaside. Councillor Henry commented that the standards of the home are a credit to management. He noted that the home had a welcoming atmosphere. Since the last visit improvements had been made to the garden including the development of the sensory garden and calm cabin; it was observed that there are more opportunities for safe play. During the visit the resources were being accessed by a child with a disability who lived in Nottinghamshire. This is encouraged by The Big House. A variety of activities were described as taking place at The Big House with young people, and their parents and carers being involved in plans. Changes have been made to care plans with individualised 'All about Me' records being completed for each young person. There was evidence of appropriate training being available to the care team. Risk assessments were in place and reviewed following incidents. Councillor Henry spoke to two staff members during the visit and noted that it was clear that they knew the young people well and were good at identifying any potential triggers to behaviours. Accidents and injuries are well recorded with managers' oversight and analysis included.

**There was one recommendation:**

- The care team should refrain from using 'Tippex' in record books.

6. **Minster View** was visited on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018 by Councillors Tracey Taylor and Boyd Elliott. They were aware and noted that issues identified earlier this year led to Ofsted revisiting the home with the outcome being that Minster View 'Required Improvement'. A whistleblowing incident led to a review of practice.

The Councillors noted that the interim manager had met with all staff to understand their issues and reassure/ stabilise the working atmosphere. She has conducted a comprehensive review of practice and process, including training, and has introduced some new routines, including a focus on safeguarding (training and process), and to reinforce processes for working and for reporting concerns.

One young person was present during this visit, attended by her care worker. She spoke to the Councillors briefly and further conversation with the care worker appeared to show a

positive relationship; support was given in relation to the young person wanting to make a hot drink for the visitors.

They recognised that young people are introduced to new activities according to expressions of interest or what is perceived to meet likes/ needs as well as to develop skills and broaden life experiences. Records of events and experiences were evidenced in scrapbooks, photo displays etc.

The Councillors commented that some staff were observed seated talking in the residents' lounge with no obvious tasks/ responsibilities. This was raised with the manager to address. They also raised concerns regarding some staff attitudes to be addressed and an over 'familiarity' with elected Members visiting the home.

**There were two recommendations:**

- Support recruitment of a safeguarding worker.
- Address issues of 'familiarity' and casualness of some staff with visiting elected members.

*Action: The new interim registered manager at Minster View is working with the staff group regarding standards. The Corporate Director for Children and Families Services, the Service Director, Youth, Families and Social Work, and the Group Manager, Looked After Children, Leaving Care & Regulated Services, are meeting with staff and with parents to share learning following the whistleblowing incident. A report will be presented to Children and Young People's Committee in due course to inform Members of the learning following the whistleblowing incident.*

7. **Caudwell House** was visited on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018 by Councillors Tracey Taylor and Boyd Elliott. There were no children/young people present during this visit. The Councillors noted that extremely robust procedures are in place to accommodate all the individual requirements of the young people at Caudwell House.

As a result of the last visit and the recommendation for an Occupational Therapist, the Councillors were pleased to note that Caudwell House now has an on-site Occupational Therapist. It was also noted that since the previous rota visit the care team were making more use of the local GP and three assistant carers have been trained to administer peg feeders for resident children (not children receiving respite/short breaks).

It was noted that the care team work with young people and encourage them to enjoy and achieve using a wide range of sensory equipment within the home. Although there is a landscaped garden further work is required to replace outdoor play equipment. Four new members of staff had been recruited.

**There were no recommendations.**

8. **Clayfields House** was visited by Councillors Errol Henry and Liz Plant on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The new Scarlet Unit has been completed and was visited by Councillors. The new vocational unit is now under construction, which is phase three of the final DfE and NCC Capital Building Programme. Councillors observed that the living areas are safe and secure

but could be more 'homely'. A roll-out programme of refurbishment is underway and decorators are due in week commencing 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019. It was noted that young people are encouraged to use the well-equipped gym and participate in individual and team sports. The multi-disciplinary approach to working with individual young people was described, with support received from educational, mental health nurses, speech and language therapist and substance misuse support workers. Young people have weekly visits from advocates and welcome this opportunity to express how they feel. The Councillors noted that there are vigilant anti-bullying procedures in place with house meetings taking place to discuss relevant issues daily. The young people have a well-established incentive scheme; they achieved excellent GCSE results this year and Councillors noted pride in their achievements and observed some of their work. There is now a full-time teacher in place in the vocational workshops and within Design Technology and this will improve the training opportunities in useful skills for life. There will be more vocational opportunities for young people when the new vocational unit is completed, as part of phase three when the hair and beauty comes on line, provisionally planned for January 2020.

It was noted that recruitment processes are in place for staff vacancies. There is a policy for development of a 'relief bank' which will achieve continuity of staff and reduce costs.

**There were two recommendations:**

- The Fire Drill log needs to be consistently recorded
- The time of fire practices needs to be consistently noted on the appropriate forms

*Action: The Centre Manager has ensured all actions have been undertaken. The specific concern around consistency in recording and the need to ensure times of evacuations and tests are carried out have been addressed and these are being reviewed monthly.*

9. **Oakhurst** was visited by Councillor Boyd Elliott on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018. The home was described as being generally in good condition, decoration of one of the downstairs living rooms had been completed, the other was in the process of being decorated by a young person. Sofas in one room were described as not being adequate and will not last, but it was noted that this is down to limited choice from the short list of suppliers.

It was noted that the young people enjoy a multitude of activities and this has had a truly positive effect on the house and morale in general.

Councillor Elliott expressed safeguarding concerns in respect of young people being supervised during the night and this was discussed with the Registered Care Manager.

**There was one recommendation:**

- Councillor Elliott recommended a door alarm which can be activated through the evening making night staff aware of any young person attempting to leave the home.

*Actions: Practice at Oakhurst is being review as is the built environment at Oakhurst. Actions have been taken to ensure that children are being safeguarded.*

## **Other Options Considered**

10. No other options have been considered.

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

11. The report provides an opportunity for the Committee to consider any further actions arising from the issues contained within the report.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

12. 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**

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

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Members consider whether there are any actions or information they require in relation to the content the report.

**Steve Edwards**

**Service Director, Youth, Families and Social Work**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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## **Constitutional Comments (SLB 28/01/19)**

14. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report. If Committee resolves that any actions are required it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

## **Financial Comments (SAS 29/01/19)**

15. 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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