



## Report of the Director of Children's Services

### Executive Board

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2008

Subject: Closure of Iveson Approach

#### Electoral Wards Affected:

Located in Weetwood  
(however all wards are potentially served  
by Iveson)

Ward Members consulted

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.0 Iveson Approach Children's Home is registered with OFSTED to provide care for 6 young people aged between 11 – 17. As part of the placement strategy for looked after children, the Chief Officer Children & Families, Children & Young People's Social Care recommends that this home be closed. The strategy aims to support the development of more individualised care for children and young people and to release funds to build a sustainable budget. The funds released by the closure will be used to buy placements from independent fostering agencies and to support individual placements with in-house foster carers.

## **1.0 Purpose Of This Report**

- 1.1 The report sets out the business case for the closure of Iveson Approach, Children's Home and describes the proposed process of closure that protects the welfare of the residents and the employment rights of staff.

## **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 Iveson Approach Children's home, located at 22 Iveson Approach, LS16 6NT, is registered with OFSTED to provide care and accommodation to 6 young people of either sex, aged 11 – 17. There are 5 young people in placement, of whom one is due to leave by the end of September 2008, two wish to remain in residential care until they move on to independence and could be accommodated at either of the Leaving Care Units and two would need revised care plans and careful matching to new placements.
- 2.2 There is a staffing establishment of twelve care staff and one six hour administrative post. Six care posts and the administrative post are filled. It is not envisaged that there would be any difficulty in redeploying staff to vacancies in other homes. All staff have employment rights and would be redeployed under Managing Workforce Change procedures.
- 2.3 The Placement of Children in Care Strategy proposes a steady, managed move away from residential care to securing individualised placements for young people with more complex needs and challenging behaviour who are usually placed in children's homes. The closure of Iveson is the first step in this process. Iveson has been chosen because it has failed to make the progress the other small group homes have made since the residential review and has had two consecutive unsatisfactory OFSTED reports. Relationships within the neighbourhood are poor, generating regular complaints. Management support and training have not succeeded in turning around the situation, staff morale is low and a number of colleagues from other disciplines have expressed concern about the home.
- 2.4 In 2007 Children & Young People's Social Care undertook the closure of Holmfield Children's Home. The process involved consultation with the young people, their parents, independent reviewing officers and social workers to work out revised care plans and the young people's interests were independently represented by the Children's Rights Service. There were also consultations with Trade Union representatives who ensured that their members' views were listened to and that the redeployment process went smoothly. The same safeguards would be put into place to manage the closure of Iveson Approach

## **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 Care Matters, in line with the Government's over-arching policy for the reform of social care, identifies the personalisation of care for looked after children as a priority. This can only be achieved by having a wide range of placements, with skilled carers who reflect the diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds of the looked after population. Whilst Leeds Fostering Service is very successful in recruiting foster carers who provide good care for a large number of children it has had limited success in recruiting carers for children with the most complex needs and demand for placements means it is difficult to provide foster homes where the young person is the only one in placement. For most this is not significant but for a minority, who have complex emotional and social problems, whose behaviour may be challenging to carers and dangerous to self or others, single placements often

represent an opportunity for their behaviour to stabilise and for a meaningful relationship with a carer to develop. However before the use of foster placements in the independent sector these young people were almost inevitably placed in residential care, where their behaviour was often contained rather than improved.

- 3.2 In the past 12 months the use of placements bought from Independent Fostering Agencies has demonstrated that children who might previously have been placed in residential care have settled and done well in single placements with well supported foster carers. The demand for placements in children's homes has decreased as a consequence. In w/c 21. 07. 08 there was one request for a placement and this young person was matched straight away. In the corresponding week in 2007 there were 8 requests and no vacancies. This rose in August to 13 – the highest figure in the last 12 months and alternative placements in independent sector foster homes were sought. Since then there has been a steady decrease in the numbers referred.
- 3.3 In order to formalise arrangements with independent agencies a rigorous tendering process has been undertaken and framework contracts have been awarded to six agencies. Each of these agencies offers a cost reduction for volume of placements and future placements will only be made with these agencies. The contract puts in place a monitoring system and a quality assurance process.
- 3.4 The combination of a reduction in requests for placements in children's homes coupled with the introduction of the framework contract creates the opportunity and conditions in which to start a managed reduction in the number of children's home placements.

#### **4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

- 4.1 The closure of Iveson Children's Home, as part of the Placement of Looked After Children's Strategy, represents a move that will enable the Council to fulfil its role of Corporate Care more effectively. It will create opportunities for young people who are looked after to receive more personalised care, better targeted to meet their individual needs.

#### **5.0 Legal And Resource Implications**

- 5.1 Members of staff who are currently employed at Iveson Approach have employment rights and their redeployment will be managed under Managing Workforce Change procedures.
- 5.2 The closure of the home and the commissioning of 6 placements in the independent fostering sector will generate a saving of £175K for re-investment. This will be used to start to build a budget for placements in this sector to which the authority has already committed because of a lack capacity in the in-house provision.

#### **6.0 Conclusions**

- 6.1 There is a strong case based on outcomes cost and quality to move resources away from group care and into personalised, individual placements for some of the most vulnerable children in the city's care.
- 6.2 Children & Young People's Social Care successfully managed the closure of Holmfield Children's Home in 2007 and has a good track record of supporting staff and children throughout the change process. The process would be managed sensitively and with care.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 The Chief Officer Children & Families, Children & Young People's Social Care recommends that the proposed closure of Iveson Approach Children's Home is approved.

## **8.0 Documents Referenced in this Report :**

THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN IN CARE IN LEEDS – A STRATEGY FOR 2008 - 2010