

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**Report to Children's Services Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 26<sup>th</sup> July 2012**

**Subject: Children's Home Review**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**1.0 Purpose of this report**

1.1 This report provides an update to the scrutiny board on progress with the review of Leeds City Council children's homes. The review of children's homes has been conducted as a strand of the obsession to reduce the need for children to become looked after. Outcomes for looked after children are generally poor and in many situations earlier effective intervention can prevent the need for this to happen. In addition to the benefits to children, young people and their families, it is highly cost-effective.

**2.0 Background information**

2.1 The number of looked after children in Leeds has been steadily increasing since 2005, with the most significant rise coming between 2009 and 2010. Between November 2009 and November 2010 the number of looked after children in the city rose from 1370 to 1434. This resulted in an increased use of external residential placements.

2.2 In response to this increase in numbers reducing the number of looked after children in Leeds was identified as an area for priority action by the Children's Trust Board. It is the Council's ambition to reduce the need for children to become looked after by providing more effective early intervention and edge of care services. These services including multi-systemic therapy and the family intervention service will help to reduce the number of looked after children in Leeds. The Family Group Conferencing Service is also being expanded to ensure that, families, whose children might otherwise be removed from their homes, are supported to develop an

alternative solution before such action is taken. There is considerable evidence that Family Group Conferencing can help children to remain within their family and community. To support this ambition an additional 2.1 million was allocated by the Council to increase capacity in relation to preventative and early intervention work.

- 2.2 A report to the Children’s Trust Board in January highlighted that although Leeds had not yet ‘turned the curve’ in relation to the number of looked after children the numbers had remained relatively stable. Between November 2011 and mid February 2012 the number of looked after children rose by only seven from 1445 to 1452.
- 2.3 In late February and March 2012 the number of looked after children increased to 1474. This increase coincided with the re-structuring of the children’s social work service. This was a complete reorganisation of the service and involved the preparation and transfer of around three thousand cases and significant change, of team, location or manager, for almost half of all social workers employed in the children’s social work teams. However, despite this development the rate of increase in Leeds was lower than in both our statistical neighbours and core cities, which experienced significant increases in numbers. Had the number of looked after children in Leeds increased at the same rate as that of our statistical neighbours there would have been 1550 looked after children in the city by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.
- 2.4 However, as the new structure has settled down the number of looked after children has decreased significantly. April saw the first month-on-month drop since November and Table One shows that this trend continued into May. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June the number of looked after children had fallen by 39 to 1435.

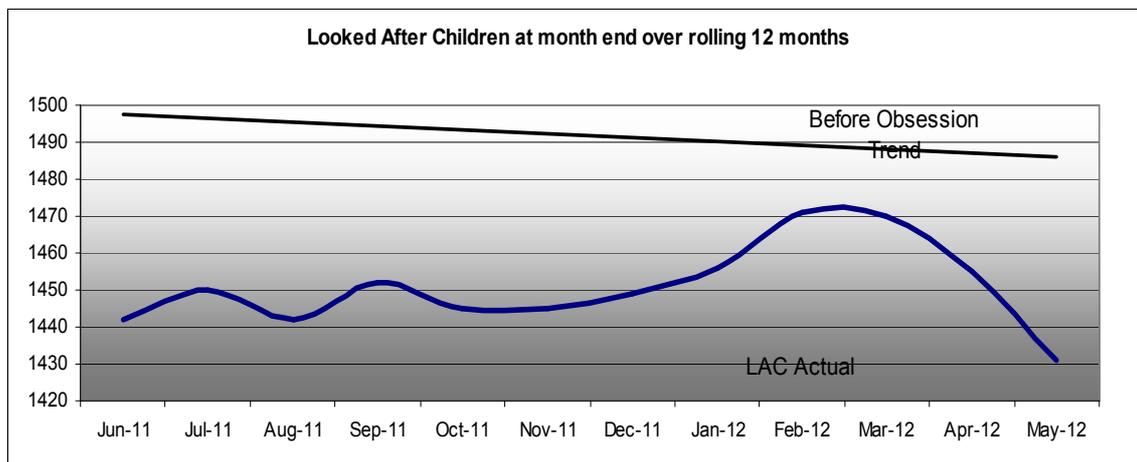


Table One

- 2.5 The review of children’s homes has therefore, been conducted as a strand of the obsession to reduce the need for children to become looked after. Proposals for children’s home development cannot be considered in isolation and sit within the wider context of improvements to children’s services and a commitment to support every child to live within their own family wherever possible.

2.7 The review has involved gathering information from:

- Consultations with children living in residential care in Leeds, their parents,
- Staff from the homes and key partners
- A buildings review of all the homes
- A needs analysis of all children in residential provision, in Leeds or external and those children identified as requiring residential provision
- Trend and demographic information
- A review of the statements of purpose and function of all the homes
- Analysis of staffing levels and training needs of staff
- Analysis of cost of internal and external provision

### 3.0 Main issues

#### 3.1 Analysis of Need

3.2 Whilst table two highlights that the proportion of looked after children aged between 11 and 18 has fallen from 51% in January 2011 to 39% in March 2012. These changes indicate improved services to ensure older children and young people remain within their families are having an impact. It also shows that the proportion of children aged 0-4 becoming looked after has increased significantly from 14% to 31%.

Age Group	Jan 2011	Nov 2011	Mar 2012
0-4	344 (24%)	429 (30%)	447 (31%)
5-10	359 (25%)	371 (26%)	385 (26%)
11-15	459 (32%)	396 (28%)	357 (25%)
16 -17	272 (19%)	211 (18%)	203 (14%)

Table Two: Number of looked after children by age group at Jan 2011, Nov 2011 and March 2012

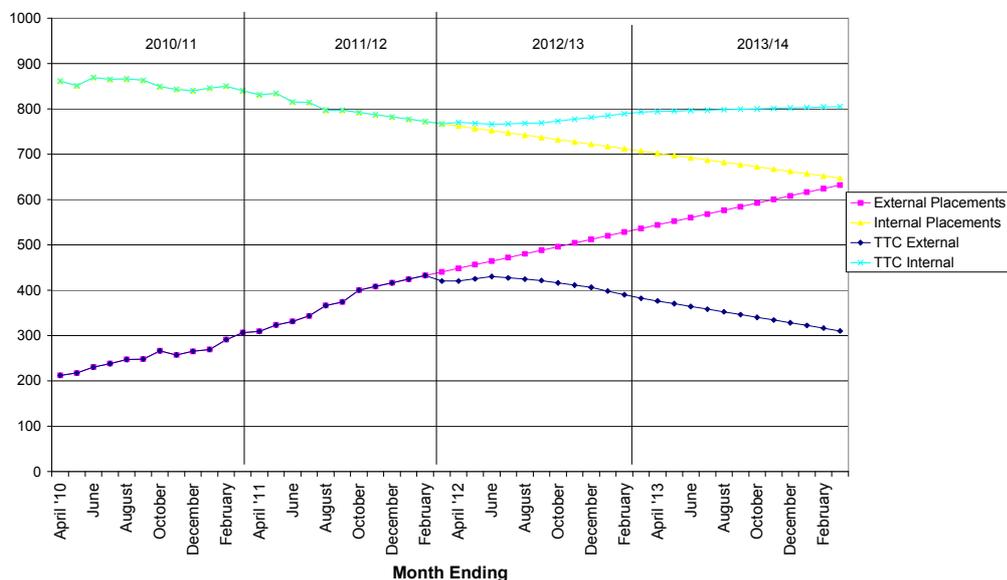
3.3 A more detailed analysis of the children becoming looked after between the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2012 has revealed a very significant change. Of the 103 children that became looked after in that period 46 were under one year of age and 70 were under five years of age. This pattern appears to have continued and reflects strengthened practice with a focus on intensive intervention where significant issues are identified.

3.4 It is important that we fully understand the needs and circumstances that led to these children becoming looking after to inform service planning and partnership working and a detailed analysis has been undertaken. The findings from this research are currently being analysed. However, a preliminary review of the data on the 46 cases involving children under one year of age indicates that 56% of children come from families affected by parental drug or alcohol misuse; 60% have parents who have mental health problems or learning disabilities and domestic violence is a significant issue in 60% of cases. 49% of children were born to mother's aged under 25. In 63% of cases a parent had had a child removed from their care previously and in one case ten children had been removed previously. 21% of children were born into families that were already open to the Children's

Social Work Service. Where children were not already known or open 13% were referred by the Police, 11% were referred by midwives and 9% from A&E or paediatric services. Although parental substance misuse was an issue in 56% of cases only 7% cases were referred by substance misuse agencies.

- 3.5 The changing trend, which is reflected nationally, has significant implications for the plans for residential children’s homes in Leeds. Children becoming looked after in the 0-4 age range will return to their birth family, placed with extended family members or, where this is not possible placed in adoptive families. They will not require residential care. In the last financial year 129 children were identified who should be placed for adoption and 40 children aged 0 to 4 placed with kinship carers. It is therefore unlikely that this increase in younger children placed in care will result in a sustained bulge in children looked after as they progress through the age groups.
- 3.6 Statistical information from the Department for Education indicates that elements of the trend in Leeds are replicated nationally. National figures confirm that children aged 11 to 15 are the only age group showing a decline in numbers looked after. The national percentage of children aged 16 and 17 has shown a small increase with 21% looked after children aged 16 and 17 in March 2011 as opposed to 17% in Leeds. A good partnership protocol has been developed in Leeds to provide supported accommodation and family mediation for homeless young people aged 16 and 17 and this has provided support to maintain lower rates of accommodation for children aged 16 and 17.
- 3.7 With the exception of some highly specialist provision, children’s homes provide care for children aged 11 plus who cannot live within a family environment. The decline in numbers of children in this age group has a significant bearing on the need for residential provision in Leeds.
- 3.8 As part of the Turning the Curve Action Plan a predictive model for the use of external placements, both residential and foster care, was developed, Table Three.

Placement Numbers March 2011 to March 2014



3.8 The model took account of the planned development and impact of preventative and early intervention services. The forecast model was developed in October 2011 and has proven to be accurate to date. Improved care planning with a focus on permanence in a family setting and effective early intervention and edge of care services are already showing a reduced need for external residential provision. On the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 there were **388** external placements which represents a net reduction of **29** placements on the position reported at the end of March 2012 (417) and a favourable variation of **34** from the numbers predicted in the Turning the Curve model.

### 3.9 Use of External Provision

3.10 A review of all young people placed in external residential placements has been undertaken and the reasons for the placement have been collated. Overall the main categories of need related to children who required:

- Residential school with specialist education provision
- Integrated care, education and therapeutic support
- Specialist placement relating to sexualised behaviour towards others
- Specialist provision to protect children from Child Sexual Exploitation
- Specialist provision for children with disabilities

3.11 It is anticipated that that the number of young people placed in external residential provision will continue to reduce as more effective planning and support enables them to move to foster care, kinship care, return to their family or to be supported to independence.

### 3.12 Current Provision in Leeds

3.13 Table four below shows the current mainstream children’s home provision in Leeds with the number of beds and the gender and age group for which the homes are registered.

<b>Children’s home</b>	<b>No of Beds</b>	<b>Age group of children or young people</b>
Cranmer Bank	5	Mixed 11 to 17
Lutterall Crescent	5	Mixed 8 to 12
Lingfield	5	15 plus leaving care
St Catherines	5	Boys 11 to 17
Easdale	5	Boys 11 to 17
Wood Lane	8	Mixed 14 to 17
Bodmin Road	12	Mixed 11 to 17
Inglewood	8	Mixed 11 to 17
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	

Table Four: mainstream children’s home provision

### 3.14 Proposals

3.15 A number of key principles have been established as part of the development of the recommendations for residential provision in Leeds. These have been informed discussions with by the consultation with children currently looked after and placed in one of our children's homes, research findings and meetings with staff and partners:

- Homes should as far as possible replicate family life. They should be small and set within local communities. Homes should be part of the community and contribute to community life
- All homes will be run based on restorative practice principles
- Except in exceptional circumstances, children's homes should not be seen as a permanence option
- Children must have an individual and clear care plan, placement plan and personal education plan which supports their development
- Children must be supported to participate in their own plans, in the running of the home and in service development
- Children should be encouraged to develop positive interests and participate in a range of activities

3.16 The proposal is to develop a flexible resource capable of meeting the needs of children and young people who may need residential care in Leeds. Changes in regulatory requirements enable local authorities to change the statement of purpose of a children's home and offer a more flexible resource, capable of adapting to meet the changing needs of children looked after.

3.17 It is also planned that one of the homes is re-shaped to provide emergency, assessment and shared care provision to further strengthen the preventative approach to maintaining children with their family. Cranmer Bank will be used to provide short term care where a family breakdown has taken place but the focus of the unit will be to work with the family and partners to return the child home as soon as possible with a support package to alleviate the underlying issues leading to breakdown.

3.18 The unit will also be able to provide support to foster or kinship placements at risk of breakdown to avoid the need for children and young people to be accommodated in residential care.

3.19 The proposed changes to each of the homes is outlined below:

<b>Children's home</b>	<b>Age group and gender of children or young people</b>
Cranmer Bank	10yrs -16yrs emergency, assessment and shared care
Lutterall Crescent	8 to 12 Mixed - No change
Lingfield	Change of age group to 11yrs to 17yrs
St Catherines	Boys 11 to 17 – No change
Easdale	Boys 11 to 17 – No change
Wood Lane	Expand age to 11 to 17 and develop close links to education provision either within the home or support to

	attend other education provision.
Bodmin Road	Mixed 11 to 17 – No immediate change with consideration of change in the future to develop education provision in one of the units so that education and care are provide on one site.
Inglewood	Mixed 11 to 17 – No immediate change however in future to replace this home with two smaller establishments.

- 3.20 Leeds City Council, currently has five, five bed roomed homes. Children in these homes have said that the care they receive is good and these homes are positively reported on by Ofsted. The proposal is to retain these homes but to develop greater flexibility in the use of the homes.
- 3.21 Cranmer Bank is developing a specialist role in emergency and short term care with a focus on outreach work to support children and young people in remaining at home. This service will supplement Multi-Systemic Therapy in supporting 11-17 year old young people on the edge of care to remain at home.
- 3.22 Lutterall Crescent provides care for younger children in need of intensive support to enable them to return to family life and will continue to provide this function.
- 3.33 Lingfield Approach currently provides a post 15 year old resource for girls. The statement of purpose will be widened. St Catherine's and Easdale Close will continue to provide placements for 11 to 17 year old young men. These three homes will have a much greater focus on supporting young people to supported living or a return to family earlier as the evidence suggests that many of these young people return home at 18 years of age in any event. The staff in these homes will provide a much more proactive approach with outreach support to enable the young people in these homes to move onto family or independent settings.
- 3.34 Inglewood children's home is in a very large home in Otley, built on a difficult to manage footprint at the end of a cul de sac with sheltered housing for the elderly. The home does not fit with the principle of smaller group homes and therefore the long term plan is close the home and reinvest resource into a smaller home at a time when the demand for residential places as a whole has sufficiently reduced or when smaller homes developed with environments and neighbourhoods are available.
- 3.35 Wood lane is an eight bedroomed home in a Victorian house bequeathed to the local authority. Whilst it does not currently fit with the principle of smaller homes the building has significant re-development potential. Consideration is being given to developing the home as a unit offering education on site with a smaller number of children, or as a semi-independence unit.
- 3.36 Bodmin Road has two homes on one site, each with 6 bed rooms. Again as the demand for residential placements falls the use of these homes can be changed based on the potential either for on site education or as a unit to prepare young people for independence.

- 3.37 It is intended that the capacity of Leeds own children’s homes remains largely similar to the current capacity. However, they will be configured differently in terms of their size and the purpose they serve for children and young people. In consultation with staff the training for residential staff will be developed to support staff to play a more significant role in taking forward the care plans for children and to work more with children on the edge of care.
- 3.38 In addition to the eight mainstream children’s homes, Leeds also has three children’s homes for children with a disability. The provision of these homes is set out in Table 5.

Home	Current Provision
Acorn	5 beds shared care
Pinfolds	12 beds in three units permanence and shared care
Rainbow	Respite 12 beds in three units

Table 5: Homes for Children with disabilities.

- 3.39 There are no proposals to change the provision of these homes. However, we are having initial exploratory discussions with Health about the feasibility of developing provision for additional resources to meet the needs of children profoundly affected by autism as this may be more effective than current arrangements.
- 3.40 Over the next 12-18 months the focus will remain on reducing the use of external residential placements and more closely focussing the work at in Leeds own residential provision on preparing children and young people for family life. This will include developments which support children and young people in residential care with their ability to engage in full time mainstream education where possible.
- 3.41 With a reduced looked after population overall and a clearer focus on preparing and moving children in residential care to family settings, the future focus of residential care will become more specialist further reducing reliance on external provision.
- 3.42 This will include development of a more comprehensive education service, capable of providing individualised packages for all looked after children. This could be linked to a school and may include education on site at one home but must include options for home tuition and individual support into school.
- 3.43 Development of specialist multi agency resources to meet the identified needs of children who require therapeutic support; have sexually harmful behaviour or have additional vulnerability. This must include specialist support from CAMHS services and intensive training for staff in children’s homes, some of whom could develop a specialism and work across homes wherever there is a need.
- 3.44 Possible development of additional resources to meet the needs of children profoundly affected by autism.

## **4.0 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 The review has been conducted in full consultation with children and young people resident in children's homes, residential staff, representatives from all key strategic partners including three elected members of the corporate carers group. Progress reports have also been presented to the corporate carers group on a regular basis.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 All children resident in Leeds City Council children's homes have been supported to participate in the consultation. Children in the disability homes had specific support to ensure their voice was heard. The parents of children in the specialist homes also participated in coffee morning consultation groups and parents of all children were written to and asked for comment. Consultation took account of any specific learning need or language need and all consultations included questions about equality and diversity.

### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The work with looked after children is a significant priority across the council and is central to the ambition to be a child friendly city. The council is required to act as a good corporate parent and to have the needs of looked after children at the centre of all plans. Children's homes are highly regulated and Ofsted judgements have implications for ratings of the council as a whole.

### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 4.4.1 As outlined earlier, this strand of work is part of the obsession to reduce the need for children to be looked after. This requires more effective early intervention and prevention avoiding the need for them to become looked after. This not only means improved outcomes for children but results in more cost effective interventions.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 This report is subject to call in.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 Failure to act to develop and improve service provision risks poor outcomes for children and young people, poor inspection outcomes and increased costs of use of external placements following placement disruption.
- 4.6.2 This work is part of the very high priority attached to the work on reducing the need for children to become looked after and is governed by the deputy director for safeguarding, targeted and specialist services.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The review of children's home provision in Leeds has been undertaken with the full

involvement of children, staff, and partners. It has also been informed by the findings of research, practice and lessons learned in other authorities and the changing trend in the ages of children becoming looked after.

- 5.2 Proposals for children's home development cannot be considered in isolation and sit within the wider context of improvements to children's services and a commitment to support every child to live within their own family wherever possible.
- 5.3 The proposals for children's homes do not envisage an increase in provision but set out a process of developing the current provision more flexibly to ensure that it meets the needs of children requiring the specialist care and support the residential homes can provide.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Children's scrutiny board are asked to note the contents of this report and accept the direction of travel in relation to children's homes in Leeds.

## **7.0 Background documents**

- 7.1 Report of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) inquiry into external Placements.