

**Report of the Director of Children and Families**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

**Subject: The Children’s Residential Review and improving support for young people**



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Adel & Wharfedale; Armely; Middleton Park; Killingbeck & Seacroft; Alwoodley; Weetwood; Bramley & Stanningley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**1 Summary of main issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an update of current work to improve the Council’s children’s homes and how this links to both a wider programme of reform of support for young people in the city and to ongoing efforts to ‘turn the curve’ and reduce the need for children and young people to be looked after.
- 1.2 The Council’s own children’s homes are an important part of the range of placement options for children looked after in the city, particularly for young people that need additional support who might struggle in foster placements. Residential homes are a vital service working all day every day with some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Leeds.
- 1.3 The Council’s children’s homes have improved over the past decade, alongside the wider improvements to children’s services in Leeds. Large scale, institutional homes have been closed and replaced with family size homes of no more than four children. There has been considerable investment in buildings and staff, most notably in the complex needs and Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) homes that have been consistently judged to be ‘outstanding’ by OfSTED.
- 1.4 In late 2017, under a new and more demanding inspection framework, three homes were criticised strongly by OfSTED. The Council acted swiftly to respond

to OfSTED's concerns, closing one home and ensuring all children were safe and supported and, where necessary, moved to new placements. It was clear that more work was needed and in January 2018 the new Head of Service began to work with staff and managers to examine the wider residential service in order to make sure that short term inspections actions were matched by a longer term strategy for change. In response, the Head of Service set up a Residential Improvement Board of managers and partner agencies to lead a wide range of improvement projects.

- 1.5 Recent and ongoing work to improve the residential service is part of a wider strategy to reform practice, services and support for young people across Leeds. Change is needed because of the differing needs and risks of adolescents and the demographic pressures that will see rising numbers of this age group over the next decade, increasing demand at a time when central government funding is likely to continue to decline. This includes a wide range of work including the Innovation Programme; Families First; the Youth Review and Intensive Positive Behaviour Service.
- 1.6 Whilst the Residential Improvement Board has had a swift and positive impact, it is clear that a more fundamental rethink and a new approach to residential services is needed – both to ensure that the residential homes continue to improve but also to make residential homes a better integrated part of the wider range of services for young people in the city, and a service that works more restoratively with young people and families, and more preventatively to resolve problems at an early stage. As such the Council has worked with Judith Hay OBE who supported the development of the “No Wrong Door” approach in North Yorkshire. The ‘No Wrong Door’ reforms were implemented as part of the national ‘Innovation Programme’ – creating multi-agency hubs around residential homes to improve joined up support for young people at risk. Ms Hay was commissioned to work with the new Head of Service to review the future purpose and role of children’s homes as part of a new approach to working with young people.
- 1.7 The Review has a range of recommendations, the most important of which is a new purpose and role for the Council’s ‘mainstream’ (i.e not including the complex needs and secure homes) residential homes:
  - One home will become a short stay ‘Safe Space’ home to help young people on the edge of care.
  - One home will become a ‘Wraparound Care Hub’ providing outreach and respite support to foster carers who care for adolescents
  - One home will become a ‘Moving to interdependence’ home with a trainer flat and a network of linked properties to help older young people prepare for life in the community. (Interdependence here is used in contrast to the traditional concept of ‘independence. This is done to emphasise the continuing need for relationships and support in adulthood)
  - Two homes will be reorganised to provide intensive ‘Towards Home’ support to help young people successfully return to their birth family or foster care

- 1.8 These homes will all be supported by an expanded multi-agency team of psychologists, youth workers and personal advisers to improve joined up help for this vulnerable group.
- 1.9 Improving outcomes for children in residential care, and improving the quality and practice of the Council's residential services, is an important part of ongoing work to 'turn the curve' on the 'obsession' of reducing the need for children and young people to be looked after. The residential review is a vital part of this work in a number of ways: better therapeutic working within the homes will help children return to their birth families or to foster care; better joined up outreach support around homes will help young people on the edge of care remain safely at home; and the review will help to increase capacity for children and young people with significant needs stay within the city and linked to their friends, schools and communities.
- 1.10 'Turning the Curve' and reducing the need for care aims to be better for children and families and better for the public purse. Better residential services, such as that seen in the city's successful MST-FIT homes, can help young people with significant needs to return home or move to foster care, reducing the high costs of long term residential care. Multi-disciplinary outreach services can help avoid care for some and support others in foster placements that are at risk of breakdown, further avoiding costs. Independent research and evaluation have shown that the Leeds MST-FIT model and North Yorkshire's 'No Wrong Door' have helped reduced the demand for care and reduced the need for residential services.

## **Recommendations**

The Board is recommended to:

- endorse the recommendations of the Residential Review
- continue to strengthen the Whole Council support for these important reforms

## **2 Purpose of this report**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an update of current work to improve the Council's children's homes and how this links to a wider programme of reform of support for young people in the city.

## **3 Background information**

- 3.1 The Council's own children's homes are an important part of the range of placement options for children looked after in the city, particularly for young people who need additional support and might struggle in foster placements. Residential homes are a vital service working all day every day with some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Leeds. The Council currently has nine homes, which are made up of four 'mainstream' homes; two complex needs homes – for both children looked after and those on short breaks; one Secure Unit (Adel Beck) and finally two specialist Multi-Systemic Therapy homes (which provide 12 week intensive therapeutic support to both young people and families to support reunification).
- 3.2 As children's homes work is so important it is subject to strong regulation and oversight from both independent 'Regulation 44' visits, pursuant of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, and OfSTED inspection. At the end of January 2019 OfSTED rate the homes as follows: five are 'Outstanding', two are rated as 'Good' and two as 'Requires Improvement'. However, in addition to these nine homes there is an additional home which was closed by the Council after failing its OfSTED inspection and will reopen as part of the implementation of the review of residential services.
- 3.3 The Council's children's homes have improved over the past decade, alongside the wider improvements to children's services in Leeds. Large scale, institutional homes have been closed and replaced with family size homes of no more than four children. There has been considerable investment in buildings and staff, most notably in the complex needs and MST homes that have been consistently judged to be 'outstanding' by OfSTED.
- 3.4 In late 2017, under a new and more demanding inspection framework, three homes were criticised strongly by OfSTED. The Council acted swiftly to respond to OfSTED's concerns, closing one home and ensuring all children were safe and supported and, where necessary, moved to new placements. It was clear that more work was needed and in January 2018 the new Head of Service began to work with staff and managers to examine the wider residential service in order to make sure that short term inspections actions were matched by a longer term strategy for change. This work identified a number of significant weaknesses in the service – variable and in some cases poor support and development of care staff and home managers; inconsistent leadership with high levels of turnover; and inconsistent and dated policies, procedures and practice in the homes. In response, the Head of Service set up a Programme Board of managers and partner agencies to lead a wide range of improvement projects, with strategic support and challenge from the Corporate Parenting Board.

## 4 Main issues

### *A new approach to working with young people*

- 4.1 Recent and ongoing work to improve the residential service is part of a wider strategy to reform practice, services and support for young people across Leeds. Changing our approach to working with adolescents is important for a range of reasons:
- 4.1.1 Research has shown that different approaches are needed to work well with adolescents – risks are different from those who are younger or older; maltreatment manifests differently compared to younger children; and adolescence itself provides a unique array of strengths and opportunities due to social and physiological development processes. Despite this services for young people are often either downward extensions of adult programs or upward extensions of child programs.
- 4.1.2 There is growing awareness about the wide range of risks for young people, with some research showing 14 as the age of peak ‘polyvictimisation’ (i.e. vulnerability to a wide range of risks), and an increase in adolescents coming into care or child protection services. There is increasing prominence of a range of risks for young people including: Child Sexual Exploitation; ‘County Lines’, knife crime and criminal exploitation; school exclusions and persistent absence; Forced Marriage; and the increased awareness of mental ill health and issues such as self-harm and eating disorders.
- 4.1.3 Evidence suggests that poor adolescent outcomes are likely to have a significant and sustained negative impact on life chances into adulthood. Exclusion from school, poor attendance, entry into care in adolescence all significantly raise the likelihood of poor health and low income, and increase the chances of adult homelessness, prison and early death.
- 4.1.4 Over the next decade this challenge will grow - the child population in Leeds is forecast to grow by 9.5% overall, but with higher growth in older age groups – with a predicted 18% growth in 10-15 year olds and 24% in 16-17 year olds over the next ten years.
- 4.2 To respond to these challenges, the Children and Families Service is working with partners in schools, NHS, Police, the Third Sector and beyond to change our approach to working with young people. The major changes include
- 4.2.1 *The Innovation Programme*: funding from the DfE to support innovation in Leeds has been targeted on developing new approaches to practice and services to support young people including:
- the Leeds Practice Model, formulation and Rethink Forums which aim to improve the quality of day to day practice through new models of assessment and planning and new approaches to peer supervision.

- the Futures Service which provides support to young parents at risk of repeated removals of their children into care.
- the 'Moving on' team who work with young people who have been placed in residential homes outside Leeds to help them safely and successfully return to the city and their communities.

4.2.2 *Families First*: as reported last year to the Board, Leeds won 'earned autonomy' status and is using the resultant flexibility and funding to invest in new approaches to adolescent working in Early Help.

4.2.3 *The Intensive Positive Behaviour Service*: funding from the Adults and Health Service and the NHS has been invested in this new evidence informed service which aims to provide high levels of support to young people with complex needs and their families where there is a risk of family breakdown and the young person entering specialist residential care.

4.2.4 *Strengthening inclusion in education*: through the Council's investment in developing the Springwell Academy and ongoing work with the Area Inclusion Partnerships.

4.2.5 *Youth Review*: ongoing work with Elected Members, communities and young people to reshape and refocus the youth service

4.3 Improving support for young people that are looked after and care leavers is rightly a priority within this strategy and so there has been considerable change in these services. Progress to date includes:

4.3.1 *Strengthened involvement of Elected Members*: the Corporate Parenting Board has been renewed, with wider membership including senior representatives from key partners e.g. in Police, NHS. The Board has agreed a new set of priorities and new arrangements for driving progress. In addition each children's home now has a link Elected Member to provide support and to act as a champion.

4.3.2 *Improved partnership working*: aligned to the new Corporate Parenting Board priorities, new multiagency groups have been set up with representation from all key local partners to agree and implement shared action plans to drive improvement.

4.3.3 *Restructured services*: social work care teams have been reorganised through the creation of a dedicated service for Care Leavers and a single, all age service for Children Looked After. This aims to improve specialist focus on care leavers and to reduce transitions for children looked after.

4.3.4 *New service leadership*: the leadership of care and care leaver services has been strengthened with a new Head of Service as well as a new Service Delivery Manager for Residential Services and new roles leading the care and care leaver services.

4.3.5 *Improved workforce engagement, support and development*: residential staff have benefited from much better involvement and support. The staff have benefitted

from more engagement in change, their first whole service away day, additional training and a new structured workforce development programme.

- 4.3.6 *Stronger independent scrutiny:* scrutiny and challenge of practice and services has been bolstered through recommissioning the 'Regulation 44' visitors that regularly review residential homes, and ongoing work with the Independent Reviewing Officers in priority areas such as care plans for young people in external residential placements.
- 4.3.7 *Updated policies and procedures:* managers have been involved in work to review and upgrade all policies and procedures, which are now consistent and available online to all homes staff. Previously each home had their own approach and often unclear policies and procedures.
- 4.3.8 *Investment in the residential estate:* improved joint working with corporate building services has led to faster ongoing repairs and over half a million pounds of investment in residential homes.

#### *The Residential Review*

- 4.4 Whilst the steps summarised in section 4.3 above have had a swift and positive impact, it is clear that a more fundamental rethink and a new approach is needed – both to ensure that the residential homes continue to improve but also to make residential homes a better integrated part of the wider range of services for young people in the city, and a service that works more restoratively *with* young people and families, and more preventatively to resolve problems at an early stage.
- 4.5 As part of this review, the Council and its partners are now involved in a radical redesign of the purpose and role of residential services and how they can best be restructured to meet the needs of both children looked after and those whose problems are so significant that they are deemed to be 'on the edge of care'.
- 4.6 The Council commissioned Judith Hay OBE, a successful and experienced children's services leader, to lead a review of local residential and care services in order to help shape our strategy. Judith led the work in North Yorkshire to develop the 'No Wrong Door' model that has improved outcomes, reduced costs and been rightly celebrated nationally as a successful exemplar of the DfE Innovation Programme and a key factor in North Yorkshire's 'Outstanding' rating from OfSTED. 'No Wrong Door' changed the role and design of residential homes radically – turning residential homes into 'hubs' of services for adolescents - integrating wider support organised through a key worker; Speech and Language Therapists; foster carers and Psychologists as Life Coaches into homes to provide more intensive and more joined up support for children looked after and those on the 'edge of care'.
- 4.7 The Residential Review has therefore been informed by national best practice and research, as well as the expertise of local services and leaders in Leeds. The Review is now complete and the main recommendations as follows:

4.7.1 *Clear principles for residential services:* the Review has been underpinned by a renewed set of principles that are consistent with the values and restorative approach of the city:

- If a child needs to be looked after they will remain in Leeds, in their own schools and communities, within a family setting wherever it is safe to do so.
- If children and young people do enter care, they will be supported to exit care where reunification is possible.
- Where this is not possible, and the permanent plan is long term care clear pathways of support will be in place to ensure that key milestones are met, and opportunities are maximised.
- There will always be a family for every child and young person in Leeds

4.7.2 *Reshaping the role of residential services:* in line with these principles, the review recommends refocusing residential services to have a clearer remit in supporting the different needs of different groups of young people. Above all, the service must have a much stronger emphasis on residential care as **'an intervention not a destination'** – i.e. that residential care is there to help children move on to family life, not as a place where children and young people will stay indefinitely.

4.7.3 *Changing the purpose and structures of Leeds' Children's Homes:* in line with these revised principles and roles, and informed by a needs analysis of young people, the following is being proposed:

- One home to become a short term 'Safe Space' support home. This will provide short term (no more than 28 days) support for young people and their families. The home will provide help where relationships within the family or events have led to a crisis. Instead of long term care this home will provide brief respite whilst at the same time undertaking intensive work with the young person and their family in order to help resolve their problems and safely return the young person home. The home will be supported by a multi-agency team including Youth Workers, Youth Justice Service officers, Family Support and the Therapeutic Social Work Team.
- One home will become a 'Wraparound Care Hub'. This home will provide outreach support and respite for young people and their carers where there is a risk of placement breakdown in foster placements. The needs analysis for the review identified a relatively high level of placements were due to foster placements for young people breaking down, and limitations to the support provided to these carers and young people. As such this new home will be supported by a multi-agency team of Youth Workers, Family Support and Therapeutic Social Work who will work not just within the home but provide in home support to foster families.
- One home will become a specialist home that will help older young people with preparation for interdependence and ongoing 'Staying Close'

support. The aim of this home will be to help, advise and support the small number of young people that are unlikely to want or be able to sustain placements with families to successfully move on to living on their own. This is being termed moving on to 'interdependence' rather than 'independence' in recognition that these young people, like everyone, will continue to need relationships and support in adulthood. This home will have an integrated 'trainer flat' and be linked to nearby Council and commissioned housing so that young people can gradually transition first to the in-home flat, then to accompanied time in a linked house then to independent time in the link house, then to taking up their tenancy on their own. It is planned that the home will continue to provide help and advice in line with the best practice principles of 'Staying Close' (a national policy drive to provide continuing support for young people leaving residential care).

- Two Homes will become 'Towards Home' homes. These homes will provide intensive, multi-agency support to young people aged 11-17 over six to nine months to help them to move on to a family setting. Support will be managed through one plan and one key worker and involve input from a wide team including Youth Workers, Personal Advisers, Speech and Language therapists, the Virtual School, Educational Psychologists.
- The two existing Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) homes would continue largely unchanged as they are already successful and have won an international award for their work. These homes will provide structured therapeutic input to young people and their families over three months to support family reunification. The only slight change would be to continue the successful trial of the use of these homes to help young people into foster families as well as birth families.
- The two 'Outstanding' complex needs homes will remain as they are, but work is underway to complete a business case to respond to growing demand.

4.7.4 *Enhanced support for foster carers that care for adolescents.* This will include recruitment of additional specialist carers; support from the Wraparound Care home; improved and integrated social work and psychological assessments for young people through use of formulation and stronger joined up working; dedicated youth work support for placements; additional social work support for carers; a residential respite service as set out above.

4.7.5 Developing further provision for children with autism and learning difficulties.

4.7.6 *Further development and redesign of the Care Leaver Service:* including developing a network of local 'One Stop Shops' for support and advice; increased specialist staffing and a wide range of work to promote more input and support from voluntary sector and Child Friendly Leeds partners

4.7.7 *Continued investment in strengthening services:* including enhanced leadership and management capacity; improved workforce development; additional capacity

in key specialisms and in particular psychology, counselling and speech and language therapists.

- 4.8 Improving outcomes for children in residential care, and improving the quality and practice of the Council's residential services, is an important part of ongoing work to 'turn the curve' on the 'obsession' of reducing the need for children and young people to be looked after. The residential review is a vital part of this work in a number of ways: better therapeutic working within the homes will help children return to their birth families or to foster care; better joined up outreach support around homes will help young people on the edge of care remain safely at home; and the review will help to increase capacity for children and young people with significant needs stay within the city and linked to their friends, schools and communities.
- 4.9 'Turning the Curve' and reducing the need for care aims to be better for children and families and better for the public purse. Better residential services, such as that seen in the city's successful MST-FIT homes, can help young people with significant needs to return home or move to foster care, reducing the high costs of long term residential care. Multi-disciplinary outreach services can help avoid care for some and support others in foster placements that are at risk of breakdown, further avoiding costs. Independent research and evaluation have shown that the Leeds MST-FIT model and North Yorkshire's 'No Wrong Door' have helped reduced the demand for care and reduced the need for residential services.

#### *Next steps*

- 4.10 Implementing the recommendations of this review will take six months to a year to complete, subject to continued strong support from across the Council and from local partners. The main tasks for the Children and Families Directorate are to recruit additional care home managers and staff; to complete work on a revised model of practice for the homes, the 'Leeds Residential Practice Model' and to progress ongoing work to reshape and enhance early help and community services for adolescents through Families First. Once the staff are in post, and the Practice Model is completed, the homes can formally change their purpose and be opened within three months. Whole Council and partners' support will continue to be vital, particularly through the work of the Asset Management Board to secure the required changes to the residential estate, and for wide input for the support teams around each home.

## **5 Corporate Considerations**

### **5.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 5.1.8 The Residential Review has benefited from strong strategic political leadership from the Corporate Parenting Board and has been informed by wide involvement of young people, homes staff and managers, social workers and senior leaders of key partners such as OfSTED, Police and NHS. Implementation will continue to closely involve all these stakeholders, for example working with CCG commissioners on psychological and speech and language therapeutic input into the homes, with Homes Managers on finalising the purpose of each home; and with staff and unions on workforce issues and practice. All of this will continue to

be led by the multi-agency Improvement Board, with strategic oversight from the Corporate Parenting Board.

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

5.2.1 The Residential Review aims to improve outcomes and work with young people who are looked after. These young people are a diverse group, and some of them will fall within protected categories of Equalities legislation. As such a full equalities impact assessment will be undertaken in advance of the implementation of the Review.

## **5.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

5.3.1 The Residential Review is an important element of the Council's priority to make Leeds a Child Friendly City and to meet the aims of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). In particular, implementing the Review's recommendations will support the CYPP 'obsession' to 'Turn the Curve' and safely reduce the need for children and young people to be looked after.

## **5.4 Resources and value for money**

5.4.1 The review will support the creation of additional residential placements within Council Children's homes and with additional specialist foster carers. This should support reduced costs of external residential placements and help to 'Turn the Curve' and reduce the overall number of looked after children.

5.4.2 The costs relating of the refurbishments of homes undertaken to date have been met through the release of capital receipts from the reduction in the size of the previous estate.

5.4.3 With regards to costs relating to the identified staffing resources these will be met within the existing budget for the services and enhanced by contributions from partners. We have now secured agreed funding from the Clinical Commissioning Group to support the enhancement of specialist therapeutic health services within the children's homes and further partnership contributions e.g. from West Yorkshire Police are also being brokered through the current multi-agency Improvement Board.

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

5.5.1 This report is eligible for call in.

## **5.6 Risk Management**

5.6.1 This report relates to two key corporate risks for the Council – the risk of safeguarding failure and the risk of inspection failure in children's services. The work of the Review will help improve support for some of the most vulnerable young people in the city. In addition this work should reduce the risk of inspection failure in children's homes and help to improve the overall rating for services for children looked after and care leavers from its current rating of 'good' to match the 'outstanding' rating for all other children's services in the city.

## **6 Conclusions**

- 6.1 The Residential Review is a valuable and important part of the city's wider strategy to improve the way we work *with* young people across Leeds. There has been strong progress over the past year to make improvements to the Council's Children's Homes but the proposals set out in the Review will allow a step change in the way we work with the most vulnerable young people in the city. The Review has been informed by national best practice, needs analysis and engagement from all local stakeholders and has the potential to both improve the lives of young people *and* make savings to the cost of placements.

## **7 Recommendations**

- 7.1 The Board is recommended to:

- endorse the recommendations of the Residential Review
- continue to strengthen the Whole Council support for these important reforms

## **8 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 8.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.