
REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES (SOCIAL CARE) CHILDREN'S HOMES

SUMMARY REPORT**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update following the most recent Ofsted Inspections.
2. To provide an overview/evaluation of the strengths and concerns in relation to the current model.
3. To provide a summary of the current progress and developments within the service

Summary

4. Since May 2010, two children's homes and the short break centre for disabled children have been inspected by Ofsted, in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000. One children's home was inspected in January 2010 and the second inspection for 2010 is pending. The provision was found to be satisfactory ("overall provision is sound") in three of the inspections, but inadequate ("notice of action to improve") in the case of one children's home.
5. Areas which were deemed as requiring action or where recommendations were made have been the subject of focused work with managers and staff in the children's homes.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) The members of the Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

Murray Rose, Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

Jean Langthorne : Extension 2069

S17 Crime and Disorder	Effective arrangements for the provision of Children's Homes and Short break facilities may have an impact on Crime and disorder
Health and Well Being	Effective arrangements for the provision of Children's Homes and Short break facilities have a direct impact on health and well being
Sustainability	Not applicable
Diversity	This provision affects all groups and the short break provision is specifically for disabled children
Wards Affected	Those in which the Homes are located
Groups Affected	Children in Care, disabled children and their families
Budget and Policy Framework	No immediate impact
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Child protection is linked to the 'Safer' theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The provision of a short break centre is linked to the 'Healthy' Darlington theme
Efficiency	There are no implications for efficiency

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. Darlington Borough Council provides residential care in children's homes for 9 young people in smaller homes at Eldon Street, Dunrobin Close and Gilling Crescent. The accommodation consists of 4 bedroomed council properties which look the same as the other homes in the area. The aims and objectives of the homes are to provide a homely environment that is safe, child centred and where young people's individual circumstances, rights and opinions are respected. The staff teams work in partnership with the young people, their parents and other professionals to ensure the young people have access to the opportunities, resources and support they need to achieve a positive future.
8. Short break care for disabled children is provided at Harewood Hill Lodge which is a purpose built bungalow offering a short break service for children with a learning or physical disability in a comfortable and safe environment adapted to meet their individual needs
9. The budget for the three smaller homes is £886,633.00 which represents a unit cost per young person per week of £1895.00.
10. The budget for Harewood Hill Lodge is £208,512.00 which represents a unit cost per young person per night of £200.00.
11. Two Ofsted Inspections are carried out annually in each of the homes in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, The National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes, The Children's Homes Regulations 2002, The Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The inspections are based on the Every Child Matters outcomes which are considered essential to the health and well being of all children and young people:-
 - (a) Being Healthy;
 - (b) Staying Safe;
 - (c) Enjoying and Achieving;
 - (d) Making a Positive Contribution;
 - (e) Achieving Economic Wellbeing;
 - (f) Organisation
12. Key Inspections look at the key National Minimum Standards and the outcomes and recommendations from the previous inspection.
13. Random inspections look at the actions and recommendations from the previous inspection and review outcomes in respect of "staying safe."
14. Appendices 1,2,3,4 provide a brief summary of the last Ofsted reports for Eldon Street, Dunrobin Close, Gilling Crescent and Harewood Hill Lodge.

Strengths of the Current Provision

15. The current residential care model provides a community based family home setting. The accommodation was secured from local council stock enabling 3 young people to maintain close links with their community in homes similar to other homes in the area and comparable to the homes they may have lived in prior to entering the care system.
16. The young people have the support of a team of residential staff providing 24 - hour care and support. Staff work closely with young people, their parents and other agencies to meet the

assessed needs of the young people.

17. Young people who require care and accommodation in residential care in general cannot cope with the emotional intensity of family living. Many have had several failed foster placements or experienced conflict in their family home.
18. Young people accessing residential care in the children's homes have a range of difficulties including learning disabilities, complex health issues, mental health problems and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Outcomes for these young people have been positive with many young people making a successful transition from residential care into independent accommodation.
19. In the last 5 years 24 young people have left residential care (smaller homes), 6 returned home to family, 4 to other children's homes (due to needing higher staff ratios to manage complex needs/challenging behaviour), 1 to prison and 14 to independent living (all but 2 were in education, employment or training when they were discharged).
20. Young people and their families who access Harewood Hill Lodge experience short breaks in a comfortable and safe environment until they reach adulthood. The staff team support the young people and their families in the transition into adult services.

Concerns (Capacity, Complexity, Community, Inspection Regime) with Current Provision

21. Since August 2007 there has been a 41% increase in demand for residential provision for young people with complex needs who are not able to live successfully in the current provision offered by Darlington Borough Council in the smaller homes or in the children's homes managed by St Cuthberts Care (which Children's Services commissioned following the closure of Salter's Lane in June 2009). The service relies on external provision to meet the demand. The average unit costs of external placements range from £1920.00 to £5509.00 per week.
22. The complexity of need differs for those with complex health issues, mental health concerns, learning disability, complex behaviours to those who need secure accommodation.
23. Three years ago there were no young people in external residential placements but as of August 2010 this had risen to 6 young people. 3 of these young people are in secure accommodation (1 welfare and 2 criminal grounds), 1 is in a specialist therapeutic placement because of complex health issues and 2 because of capacity issues/mix of young people.
24. Currently the residential service has been requested to provide residential placements for 3 young people who are currently in foster care and are awaiting planned moves to a residential provision to meet their needs.
25. Accommodation in the Children's Services 3 smaller homes is provided from local council stock and although this enables young people to maintain links to the community, the accommodation is often small and space can be a concern. Young people with complex needs often need the space to be on their own or be segregated for short periods. Additionally external partners who offer support need space to meet with young people and staff.
26. When the model of smaller homes was first introduced in 1997 concerns were raised that there would be an influx of complaints from local residents. However the Residential Management Team worked closely with local councillors and the neighbourhood and very few issues have been reported. Any complaint that has been received is resolved quickly and good community relationships are maintained.
27. The provision at Harewood Hill Lodge offers short breaks for disabled children is only available part time.

28. The management team are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the Ofsted requirements as detailed in the National Minimum Standards and Children Homes Regulations 2002 and continue to work towards improving the ratings in all the homes. The government's current inspection regime is geared to measure the processes undertaken by the home rather than the outcomes for young people. Documentation requirements can be repetitive and time-consuming and Inspectors have occasionally become embroiled in care planning. However, the current minimum standards which were introduced over 8 years ago are currently under review.

Solutions/Progress

29. For young people in placement it is sometimes necessary to increase staffing Levels for short periods to avoid young people feeling the rejection of a further move. At the time of this report, that was the situation at Dunrobin Close (August 2010). Support from other professionals has also increased, including young people's Mental Health Services, Substance Misuse Services, and input from the Youth Offending Service.
30. The Residential Management Team work closely to meet the Ofsted requirements following the inspection process in order to improve the Homes' ratings – meeting with regional Ofsted offices on a regular basis to discuss issues.
31. Links are in place with other local authorities to share good practice around the Inspection process.
32. Workstreams have been undertaken by the Children's Services Project Team in accordance with the Transformation Agenda to look at Children's Residential Services and potential options for service provision. This will include looking at the current model to determine cost effectiveness in terms of value for money, positive outcomes for young people and ensure placements are based on assessment of a young person's needs, not available provision. Additionally it will identify the demands for future residential services in accordance with outcomes, costs and Ofsted ratings.
33. There is a proposal to develop a Placement Panel to manage those seeking placements e.g. social workers. This will improve individual placement planning and reduce placement breakdowns.
34. Following a successful bid for funding from the Aiming High for Disabled Children Projects, Harewood Hill Lodge has been able to increase their capacity offering additional overnight provision and day care. This has been particularly welcome during the school holiday period.
35. A business plan is almost completed which will outline a range of options for the use of Harewood Hill Lodge. This development is reliant on continued Aiming High funding.
36. A further Children's Services Project is undertaking a review of the information technology systems. This is a result of work being done nationally by Professor Eileen Munro who is looking at how the service can remove the barriers and bureaucracy from social work practice that prevent face-to-face time with children and families. The Project Manager is meeting with the Residential Management Team on 3/9/10 to discuss how to improve and simplify the documentation/processes required by Ofsted.
37. Darlington Looked After Children Strategic Leads Group have been tasked to identify additional support/resources that can be utilised to help young people with complex needs i.e. increased input from CAMHS and Children's Services (Education) Behaviour and Attendance Team who offer support to vulnerable groups within mainstream schools
38. The Children and Young Persons Act (2008) is likely to increase the range of enforcement options open to Ofsted by giving the Chief Inspector power to restrict new admissions to Children's Homes and to issue a compliance notice to an establishment or agency that is not meeting its statutory requirements. It is intended that these regulations will come into force in April 2011. The Residential Management Team are currently updating procedural guidance to ensure that the needs

of both the young person needing a placement and the young people already living in the home are considered, prior to agreeing an emergency placement.

39. Ofsted are consulting with local authorities on proposals for a revised framework for the inspection of children's homes. Ofsted are seeking a range of views from those who have an interest in, or expertise relating to, children's homes in order to ensure that the inspection framework takes proper account of the needs and circumstances of all interested parties. The aim is to assure the quality of services for the children and young people who live in children's homes, and support their continuing improvement. They are interested to hear from children and young people who live in or have lived in children's homes. This consultation is being led by the Corporate Parenting Officer and is due to be completed by 31 October 2010.
40. The Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership have initiated a project "The Tees Valley Sub-regional Commissioning Review of Residential Provision". The objectives of the project are to review the Tees Valley commissioning of residential provision and to develop a 10 year commissioning plan. The aim is to use current data and market information to identify cashable efficiencies, increase authorities market management ,attract new providers into the North East in order to increase service choice, have a consistent approach to transition into adult services and work innovatively. The plan is expected to be completed by April 2011.

Conclusion

41. Children's Services face many challenges in the next year in relation to the development of the service of Children's Residential provision.
42. Project managers have been tasked to analyse and build on the current model to increase locally based residential provision within the community, identify joint tendering with other local authorities and produce a commissioning plan to attract new providers.
43. Children's Residential Services are working closely with other local authorities and Ofsted to improve service provision and outcomes.
44. These developments should result in the availability and choice of a range of high quality, child focussed provision which is effective and best value for money.

Outcome of Consultation

45. Not applicable

Eldon Street

Inspection Date: 07/07/10

Type of Inspection: Random

Quality Rating: Satisfactory (a sound provision)

The report outlined improvements since the last inspection included:

- Countering bullying measures are improved
- Monitoring systems now include regular consultation with children, parents and social workers.
- Written education plans are in place for those young people who do not attend school.

The inspection judged that the provision in 'helping children to be healthy' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Meals are social occasions.
- Health care plans reflect known health needs.
- Boys and girls groups have been set up to talk about health promotion.
- The looked after nurse is available to support health needs.

No concerns recorded.

The inspection judged that the provision 'protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children feel their privacy is respected.
- Children know how to complain and staff have received training.
- Children's welfare is safeguarded.
- Countering bullying measures are in place and risk assessments are regularly reviewed.

Concerns included:

- The home's fire risk assessment needs updating.

The inspection judged that the provision 'helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children feel supported and have regular one to one Key worker sessions.
- Educational plans for children not in full time school are in place with some positive arrangements.
- Children have access to educational support workers.

Concerns included:

- Outcomes from education planning meetings are not always acted upon.

The inspection judged that the provision 'helping children to make a positive contribution' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Placement plans reflect children’s needs and outcomes.
- Children are happy with contact arrangements.
- The Statement of Purpose gives clear information to children.
- Children, parents and social workers are consulted about the operation of the home.

Concerns included:

- Not all placement plans are evaluated.
- No recorded information to show the impact of emergency admissions to the home.

The inspection judged that the provision 'achieving economic wellbeing' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children are encouraged to learn independence skills.
- Children are shown practical skills and help with cooking meals and shopping.
- Children live in a homely environment.
- The house is decorated and furnished to a satisfactory level.

Concerns included:

- The location of the home is not an attractive area; there is a lot of litter and graffiti.

The inspection judged that the 'organisation' is satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children, parents and social workers are given satisfactory information about how it is to live in the home.
- Staffing meets the needs of the children.
- Children are looked after by staff who are qualified..
- There are systems in place to monitor the homes performance.
- Consultation with children and parents is good.
- Children’s records include all the required information.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.
- The home is regularly monitored.

Concerns included:

- There is not an annual development plan to show a long term improvement plan.

There was 1 requirement as a result of the inspection.

Required Action	Action Taken	Date
Take adequate precautions against the risk of fire (Regulation 23 (1)(a)).	DBC Community Services have been asked to update the homes fire risk assessment to take into consideration the new decking in the garden.	July 2010

Harewood Hill Lodge

Inspection Date: 09/06/10

Type of Inspection: Key

Quality Rating: Satisfactory (a sound provision)

The report outlined improvements since the last inspection including:

- The homes monitoring system has been improved..

Concerns included:

- Actions to improve the safe administration of medicine have not been met.

The inspection judged that the provision in 'helping children to be healthy' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children enjoy a healthy nutritious diet.
- Policies are in place to manage children's primary health needs.
- All staff have up to date First Aid certification.

Concerns included:

- Children are not protected by the homes procedures to safely administer medicine.

The inspection judged that the provision 'protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children are treated with dignity and respect.
- There is good information about how to complain.
- Behaviour is managed properly – good behaviour is rewarded.
- There is no bullying in the home.

Concerns included:

- There are no moving and handling risk assessments.
- Risk assessments do not fully protect children.

The inspection judged that the provision 'helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do' was good.

Strengths included:

- Children are given good individual support in line with their needs and wishes.
- Children's educational needs are supported.
- Children are consulted about their wishes and feelings.

No concerns recorded.

The inspection judged that the provision 'helping children to make a positive contribution' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Contact arrangements are in place.
- Procedures are in place to introduce children to the home.
- Children, parents and social workers are consulted about how it is to stay at the home.
- Children have the opportunity to have teatime visits so that they can meet staff.

Concerns included:

- Placement plans do not adequately show children's assessed needs or how these will be met.
- Not all children have regular placement meetings.

The inspection judged that the provision 'achieving economic wellbeing' was good.

Strengths included:

- Children enjoy homely accommodation that is decorated to a high standard.
- There are lots of photographs of children engaging in a wide range of activities.
- Each child has a bedroom to themselves.

Concerns included:

- There are no procedures that explain how staff contribute to support children moving into adulthood.

The inspection judged that the 'organisation' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children are consulted about how they feel about staying at the home.
- The Statement of Purpose reflects the services offered.
- Over 80% of staff have their NVQ Level 3 (CCYP).
- Children have a record of their needs and files are stored securely.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory..

Concerns included:

- The staffing policy is not included in the Statement of Purpose.

There were 4 requirements as a result of the inspection.

Required Action	Action Taken	Date
Make suitable arrangements for the recording, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21(1)).	All equipment purchased and consent letters signed. New policy written and staff re-trained in the new procedure.	31 July 2010
Prepare, in consultation with the child's placing authority, a written plan, referred to as a placement plan that includes all the elements listed in this regulation (Regulation 12(1)).	All residential placement plans have been updated and reviewed to include all of Regulation 12(1). In addition, an 'about me' book has been created to compliment the residential placement plan.	31 July 2010
Ensure that unnecessary risks to the health and safety of children accommodated in the home are identified and so far as possible eliminated (Regulation 23 (c)).	New risk assessments have been written to meet Regulation 23 (c), which include bedrails and bumpers. Changes have also been made to personal risk assessments and the residential placement plan.	31 July 2010
Ensure provider visits include interviews with parents in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33(4) (a)).	This is being addressed through an updated revision of Regulation 33 documentation and a workshop for all officers will take place on 15 th Sep 10.	31 July 2010

The Children's Residential Management Team are aware of their responsibilities in relation to Ofsted requirements and continue to work towards improved ratings in all the homes.

Dunrobin Close

Inspection Date: 25/05/10

Type of Inspection: Key

Quality Rating: Inadequate (notice of action to improve)

The report outlined improvements since the last inspection including:

- Regulation 33 reports show how complaints are looked at.

Concerns included:

- Not all child protection referrals have been recognised and referrals not made.
- Not all notifiable events have been notified to Ofsted in line with Schedule 5 requirements.

The inspection judged that the provision in 'helping children to be healthy' was inadequate.

Strengths included:

- Children are consulted about what food they like to eat.
- Children enjoy cooking and baking.
- Children are registered with local primary health care services.

Concerns included:

- Health care plans do not adequately reflect known assessed needs.
- Health care plans do not include important information that may have a direct impact on the safety of children.
- Consent cards not fully completed to safeguard children from receiving inappropriate medical care.

The inspection judged that the provision 'protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe' was inadequate.

Strengths included:

- Children know how to complain.
- Children know how to consult advocacy services.
- The home has made positive links with the local police.

Concerns included:

- Children's privacy and confidentiality is not adequately protected.
- Children's welfare is not safeguarded by robust reporting systems.
- Children are not protected from bullying.
- Not all significant events are reported.
- Individual risk assessments do not always include all known risks.

The inspection judged that the provision 'helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children receive good support.
- Arrangements have been made for professional agencies to visit the [home .e.g.](#) health professionals and the police.
- Education is promoted and there is some innovative work being done to help children achieve their potential.
- Children are encouraged and supported to pursue individual interests.

Concerns included:

- Key worker sessions are held regularly but it is not always clear about the views and thoughts of the children.
- Placement plans do not adequately reflect all children's assessed needs.

The inspection judged that the provision 'helping children to make a positive contribution' was inadequate.

Strengths included:

- Children are encouraged and supported to attend reviews.
- Children moving into the home are given information about how it is to live there.
- Children are consulted in Key worker sessions and team meetings,

Concerns included:

- The objectives of each placement plan are not clear and do not reflect each child's individuality
- Minutes of meetings are not always available.

The inspection judged that the provision 'achieving economic wellbeing' was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children enjoy helping with shopping and cooking.
- Children live in a comfortable homely environment.
- The home is decorated to a satisfactory standard.

No concerns recorded.

The inspection judged that the 'organisation' was inadequate.

Strengths included:

- Children, parents and social workers are given written information and the Statement of Purpose covers the required elements.
- Staff are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people.
- Staff receive regular training.
- Regulation 33 visitors identify where there are issues about the care of children..

Concerns included:

- Systems to monitor the performance of the home are inadequate.
- Children's records do not adequately reflect their needs, development and history.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate.

There were 10 requirements as a result of the inspection.

Required Action	Action Taken	Date
Maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure they are kept up to date (Regulation 29(1)).	All records are now up to date in line with Regulation 29 and if any agency staff are used CRBs and CVs will be kept and monitored on a monthly basis.	09 July 2010
Ensure the prompt referral to the local authority in whose area the children's home is situated, any allegations or suspicions of abuse affecting any child accommodated in the children's home (Regulation 16(2)(b)).	All allegations or suspicions of abuse are referred to the Local Authority immediately. The incident in the main body of the report is being challenged by Darlington Borough Council and the Assistant Director (Children and Families) is meeting with an Officer from Ofsted.	30 June. 2010
Notify without delay the persons indicated in Schedule 5, any events listed in this Schedule (Regulation 30(1)).	When an incident has occurred, all of the persons identified in Schedule 5 are notified immediately as discussed in a team meeting. The incident in the main body of the report is being challenged (see above).	30 June. 2010
Promote and protect the health of children accommodated in the children's home (Regulation 20(1)).	Health care plans are in place for the young people and now reflect, promote and protect health needs of the individual young people in the home.	30 June. 2010
Make suitable arrangements to ensure that the home is conducted in a manner which respects the privacy and dignity of children accommodated there (Regulation 11(2)(a)).	All private information with regard to young people has been removed from the office wall. This has been re-enforced to staff at team meetings and through individual emails.	28 June. 2010
Prepare and implement a written policy for the prevention of bullying in the children's home (Regulation 16 (4)(a)).	The children's home had a countering bullying policy and this has been re-iterated with staff to ensure it is implemented effectively. The anti-bullying co-ordinator has also spoken to the staff.	30 June. 2010
Ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measures of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose that includes the information listed in this regulation (Regulation 17(4)).	All measures of control, restraint or discipline were recorded on the appropriate paperwork and staff have been informed at a team meeting and by individual emails that the effective needs are to be recorded on the form when	28 June. 2010

	completing it.	
Prepare in consultation with the child's placing authority, a written placement plan setting out all the elements listed in this regulation (Regulation 12).	All young people's placement plans are written in line with the elements listed in Regulation 12 and all social workers have been requested to approve and add views to these plans.	15 July 2010
Ensure that unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children are identified and so as far as possible eliminated (Regulation 23(c)).	All young people's risk assessments have been reviewed and updated as and where necessary to try to eliminate risks as far as possible. This will now be done on a monthly basis.	30 June. 2010
Establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 5 and ensure the system provides for consultation with parents of the children accommodated at the home (Regulation 34(1)(a) and (3)).	I believe this is a typing error and should be Schedule 6. I am going to establish a bi-monthly newsletter / questionnaire to send out to parents, young people and other professionals to ensure there is a system in place for consultation. An action plan will be drawn up if necessary.	31 July 2010

Gilling Crescent

Inspection Date: 6 January 2010 –

[the second Ofsted Inspection for 2010 is pending at Gilling Crescent – August 2010]

Type of Inspection: Random

Quality Rating: Satisfactory (overall provision is sound)

The report outlined improvements since the last inspection included:

- A telephone has been installed so children can make and receive calls in private.
- Staff are aware of permissible sanctions.
- Staff are aware of the correct procedures for recording restraints.
- Placement and health care plans have improved.

In this inspection the provision for ‘Helping Children to be Healthy,’ ‘Helping Children Achieve Well and Enjoy what they Do,’ ‘Helping Children make a Positive Contribution,’ ‘Achieving Economic Wellbeing’ were not judged.

The Inspection judged that the provision for ‘Protecting Children from Harm or Neglect’ and ‘Helping them Stay Safe’ was satisfactory.

Strengths included:

- Children know how to complain and feel they can talk to staff and details of advocacy services are easily accessible.
- There is no bullying in the home. The countering bullying risk assessment is regularly reviewed.
- There are agreed protocols with local police to protect young people who go missing.
- Behaviour is monitored appropriately and reward systems are in place.

Concerns included:

- Some risk assessments are out of date.
- Unclear procedure to determine under what arrangement staff can enter young people’s room.

There were two requirements as a result of the inspection.

Required Action:	Action Taken:
Prepare and implement a written policy which staff in particular provide for the prompt referral to the Local Authority any allegation affecting any child accommodated in the home. Regulation 16(2)(6)	The Registered Manager has been advised to ensure the requirement is adhered to.
Ensure unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children are identified and so far as possible eliminated. Regulation 23(c)	All risk assessments are regularly reviewed/amended.

