

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

12 September 2018

Children's Residential Homes

Report by the Executive Director Children, Adults, Families, Health and Education

Summary

The County Council owns and operates 7 children's homes across the county and until June 2018 (aside from Beechfield Secure Unit), all homes were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, the regulatory body for these services.

On the 26th June 2018 Ofsted conducted a full inspection of Seaside, the council's 6 bedroomed children's home located in Shoreham by Sea. Following this inspection their judgement was that the service was inadequate. A suspension of service notice was given.

In a subsequent visit conducted on 3rd August 2018, Ofsted judged that insufficient progress had been made to address the issues raised within their initial inspection. As a result a notice to suspend the registration of Seaside children's home was issued on 9th August 2018.

Subsequently, the Senior Management Team within Children and Family Services undertook quality assurance visits of the remaining children's homes. The visits identified some concerns in two other homes, Cissbury Lodge, a 16 bedroomed home, and May House, a 3 bedroomed home, both located in Worthing. 'Outreach' arrangements were ceased at Orchard House.

Predominantly, the concerns centred on the levels of staffing available to deliver the quality of services offered and also the physical condition of the buildings.

As a result the decision was made to withdraw services from both homes and seek alternative provision for the service users. Two homes would continue to operate at their current service levels and one home ceased providing a small number of outreach support activities.

On the 29th August 2018 a meeting was held for members of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee, Corporate Parenting Panel and the local member for Seaside. At that meeting, members concerns and questions were addressed by officers, and it was agreed to table this item at the Select Committee on 12th September to ensure that concerns raised by members and the public could be fully addressed.

The focus for scrutiny

This report aims to assure members of the actions being taken to improve the quality and safety of provision in some residential children's homes in West Sussex. The report also highlights the investment required in order to continue to improve the capacity and capability of the workforce and ensure the buildings infrastructure is fit for purpose.

Recommendations:

- (1) That the Committee notes the residential improvement plan in respect of children's homes in West Sussex
- (2) That the Committee works with officers to agree a protocol for communication with members following an inadequate inspection of a children's home
- (3) That the Committee notes the investment required in the children's residential estate in order to build capacity – namely ongoing investment in the infrastructure and maintenance of the estate
- (4) That the Committee notes the strengthened investment required in the children's estate in order to build its capability – including the review of the grading of some posts, leadership capacity, an enhanced learning and development offer and support to management and staff working across children's residential care.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Seaside children's residential home (Shoreham by Sea), was inspected on 26th June 2018 and found to be inadequate. Compliance notices were issued and a return visit was undertaken on 3rd August 2018. Compliance was noted in only one area and therefore a notice of suspension was issued.
- 1.2 Arrangements were made for the four permanent residents to be moved to alternative placements. This move was supported by social workers and the placement team and took place on Friday 10th August 2018.
- 1.3 Seaside's previous Ofsted ratings at full inspection have been as follows: July 2012 Good, August 2013 Outstanding, March 2015 Outstanding, December 2015 Good, September 2016 Inadequate, July 2017 Good, 2018 Inadequate.
- 1.4 A new registered manager (RM) was appointed at Seaside in June 2017. An existing, high performing RM was allocated as mentor who had previously been covering Seaside following the departure of the previous RM. Work was undertaken at Seaside and the home was recognised by Ofsted to have made significant improvement in July 2017.
- 1.5 On 20th February 2018 the RM left their role unexpectedly and interim cover was put in place through the appointment of an acting manager, who was then appointed as RM
- 1.6 Prior to the Ofsted inspection at Seaside we were aware of a range of issues, such as challenges in the recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced

staff resulting in higher use of agency staff than is desired. Staff recruitment is an issue for the majority of children's homes and a new website and refreshed recruitment processes were launched over the summer. This initiative was part of an overall residential estate improvement plan. Following the inadequate rating at Seaside a specific compliance/improvement plan was put in place by the service. The implementation of this plan was led by the Service Manager (SM) and Registered Manager (RM) reporting to the Head of Children's Social Care and the Head of Market Development. However, despite a range of intensive interventions targeted to improve the quality and safety of provision at Seaside, these did not succeed within the short timeframe of the compliance notice in bringing about the necessary changes to the stringent safeguarding practice requirements that are required in our children's homes.

- 1.7 As outlined in the Ofsted report managers and staff were not consistently robust enough in identifying risk factors and putting mitigations, through robust safety planning, in place for each child. Escalation of concerns through the appropriate governance mechanisms were not complied with and this matter is currently subject to further investigation.

The Wider Residential Estate

- 1.8 The council owns and operates 6 children's homes across the county. Of the 52 registered beds, 41 are for children with learning or physical disability and 11 for children unable to live with their families due to a variety of concerns such as neglect, abuse or behavioural issues.
- 1.9 Approximately 70 children receive a variety of services from our homes. The service offer includes full time residential care, shared care arrangements (usually residing in a home for over 75 nights per year) and short break/respice support which consists of various levels of overnight care and day time care and support.
- 1.10 The wider residential market for children consists of 32 children's homes across the county providing 200 registered beds. As the provider of 6 homes and 52 beds the council represents 25% of the current supply available overall.
- 1.11 Only 5 homes are registered for children with learning or physical disability, 4 of which are provided by the council, as such we provide 75% of the available supply of this type.
- 1.12 On the 8th August senior managers undertook a quality assurance visit at Cissbury Lodge, which identified concerns regarding the levels of staffing available relative to the volume of services offered and the physical condition of the building itself.
- 1.13 On 10th August 2018, senior managers undertook further quality assurance visits to the remainder of the council's children's homes. This exercise was supported by the Head of Safeguarding and co-ordinated by the Head of Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement. They were satisfied that the services offered were of a good quality.
- 1.14 As a result of the visits, the council has made the decision to withdraw services and temporarily suspend services at two homes (Cissbury Lodge and

May House). The children living at these homes are in the process of being found suitable alternative accommodation and support.

- 1.15 The remaining three Children's Homes – Teasel Close, High Trees and Orchard House continue to provide high quality care for vulnerable children with disabilities, high needs and challenging behaviour. A small number of outreach activities were ceased at Orchard House.
- 1.16 The Residential Improvement Plan has been refreshed and governance is through the Residential Improvement Board (RIB). The chair of the Board going forward will be Kim Curry, Executive Director.

2. Proposal – the committee is asked to note the following:

- 2.1 A broader residential improvement plan has been in place since 2016. This was updated to take into account the findings of the Seaside inspection. The improvement plan will be shared with Members at the committee meeting.
- 2.2 The capacity of the current residential estate is also under review. The estate forms part of Phase I of the corporate viability study across all assets owned by the council.
- 2.3 The capability of the council to deliver this service has also been reviewed. A targeted initiative has been introduced focussing on the training requirements of existing and future residential care workers. The training includes areas identified within the Ofsted report for Seaside and also other mandatory and statutory training requirements.

3. Resources

- 3.1 Recommendations from this report will have an implication on revenue finances concerning staffing, training and general operating costs associated with delivering residential care. There will also be an implication on capital finances as there will be an ongoing requirement for remedial capital investment in all the homes to ensure business continuity of services. The viability study will also highlight the scale of future capital investment required.

Factors taken into account

4. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee

- 4.1 To consider the 4 recommendations as outlined in the summary section of this report.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 A briefing for all members of Children and Young People's Services Select Committee, Corporate Parenting Panel and the local member took place on

29 August 2018. The Cabinet Member has been kept informed of progress, as well as staff at the children's homes concerned.

6. Risk Management Implications

6.1 There are risks inherent in operating a children's residential estate given the complexities and challenges of the client group. The improvement plan outlines the areas of improvement, risks and mitigations.

6.2 The residential estate plan and implementation will be added to the Children and Families risk register and the CAFHE risk register.

7. Other Options Considered

7.1 The recommendations outlined in this report are essential to ensuring West Sussex County Council is providing the best level care, and keeping all children safe.

8. Equality Duty

8.1 Considering all protected characteristics, this report only applies to "age". Proposals in this report have no disproportionate impact on this characteristic, as it will ensure that all children are kept safe, and full risk registers are kept within homes.

9. Social Value

9.1 N/A.

10. Crime and Disorder Implications

10.1 N/A.

11. Human Rights Implications

11.1 N/A.

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Background Papers: [Ofsted Reports](#)