

Report title	Children with Complex Needs and Disabilities Children's Homes Review	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi Children and Young People	
Wards affected	All Wards	
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Report has been considered by	Children's Services Leadership Team	10 November 2022
	Children in Care Council	7 December 2022

Recommendations for action:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Endorse the Children with Complex Needs and Disabilities Children's Homes Review report.

Recommendations for noting:

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note:

1. The findings within the attached report as outlined at 3.0.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of bringing this report to Corporate Parenting Board is to assure the Board that Quality and Safety Reviews (as outlined below) have been completed and to report on whether children and young people with Complex Needs and Disabilities are provided with safe and good quality Children's Homes.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Panel is currently undertaking a national review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in Children's Homes.
- 2.2 The Review is considering the experiences of children placed in three specialist independent residential settings located in the Doncaster area. The Review is being completed in two phases, with a plan to publish the Phase One report in the autumn of 2022.
- 2.3 On 23 August 2023, Annie Hudson, Chair of the CSPR Panel, wrote to all Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) in England requiring them to ensure that Quality and Safety Reviews are completed for all children with complex needs and disabilities currently living within placements with the same registrations (i.e., residential specialist schools registered as children's homes) to ensure they are in safe, quality placements.
- 2.4 DCSs are asked to provide an overview report on key findings and issues to both their local Corporate Parenting Board and to local safeguarding partners, together with assurance that the Quality and Safety Reviews have been completed. Further guidance from Ofsted confirmed the names of 48 Children's homes that required review.

3.0 Findings

- 3.1 It has been identified that 12 children and young people with disabilities and/or complex needs are currently in Children's Homes. No City of Wolverhampton children reside in the 48 homes identified by Ofsted and thus we provided a "nil" return to CSPR Panel. However, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) have continued to review the 12 children in care with a disability and residing in a children's home for additional oversight.
- 3.2 11 out of the 12 children and young people's homes are joint funded by education (within City of Wolverhampton Council) and health. Their Children's Home's funding is agreed jointly and reviewed within External Placement Panel. There is added assurance that children and young people's needs are being met to a good standard by their Children's Home provider.
- 3.3 The review considered the following areas:
 - Communication Plans
 - Behaviour Plans

- Health Information
- Education
- Family Time
- Child/Young Person's experience of placement
- View of family/others who are important to the child/young person
- Views of key professionals
- Whether the social worker feels the child/young person is safe

3.4 Communication Plans:

- a. Two reviews identified that communication plans were needed and in place.
- b. Both of these reviews also identified that the plans are up to date and there is evidence that they are used.
- c. All other reviews stated that a communication plan was not required.

3.5 Behaviour Plans:

- a. It was identified that nine young people require a behaviour plan; eight were in place and staff are trained to use them. The ninth is being developed as the young person has recently moved to their current home. While this is in progress, there is a risk assessment in place which is adhered to and regularly updated. Also, all staff are aware of the young person's behaviour needs and how to best support the young person.
- b. The review identified that the other three young people do not require a behaviour plan.

3.6 Health:

- a. In regard to health, all of the children/young people have an up-to-date health record, their medications are used appropriately and are securely stored, and each child/young person's physical and mental health needs are understood and met by the adults who care for them.
- b. Subsequent to the review, the health professional for one of the young people was contacted and informed that the home wanted more support from health colleagues. They reported that they were struggling with the young person's behaviour and his medical needs, although this was not expressed during the review. This will be followed up further by health and social care together to ensure a plan of action is put into place and that the young person is supported and safeguarded.

3.7 Education:

- a. 10 of the 12 children/young people were identified to be attending school regularly and meeting targets.
- b. One young person is on a reduced timetable and there is discussion around permanent exclusion, this is despite having 2:1 support.
- c. One young person is not currently in an education setting and this is being explored in order to find a setting that best meets his needs. In the meantime, he is receiving daily tutoring for two hours.
- d. One young person has been suspended from his education provision and is attending a setting that focuses on skills such as budgeting, rather than education. Prior to this review, issues were identified with this setting, and all involved feel that this is not an appropriate setting for the young person. Work is ongoing to rectify this and find a more appropriate setting for this young person and the care home provides a support worker to attend with the young person in the meantime in order to ensure his needs are met.

3.8 Family Time

All of the children/young people are supported to have maximum family time with those who care about them, including parents and siblings where appropriate, as well as previous carers. For most, family time takes place face to face—some supervised and some unsupervised (including overnights), and for a few this takes place virtually or by telephone. In all instances, the child/young person is supported physically and emotionally by staff.

3.9 Child's View of Placement

- a. All of the children/young people who were part of this review said that they are happy in their current homes and that they feel safe. One young person is non-verbal and has minimal communication ability but from observations and experiences of allied professionals it is deemed that he is happy and settled.
- b. Some of the children/young people identified that feel that the staff are their family and that they are happy to call their placement "home".
- c. One said that he likes living in his current home and would only want to move if he were able to move back with his mother.
- d. One is happy in his home but would like to be closer to Wolverhampton, where his friends and family all live. He feels that the distance, alongside his college schedule, makes it difficult to maintain friendships and important relationships.
- e. One young person reported that while he is happy with his home, he is sometimes teased by the other children in the home, and this makes him sad. He also feels that staff can be strict at times but, again, he is generally happy.

3.10 Family View of Placement

- a. The parents of two children/young people were not able to be contacted due to their whereabouts currently being unknown.
- b. Of the 10 parents/carers spoken to, all said that they were happy with their child's home and that they see this as positive for their children. There were positive comments around communication as well as the support and relationship building between their child and the staff who are looking after them. They all wish for their child to remain in their current home. One said that while they are happy with their child's home, they do wish it were closer.

3.11 Key Professional Views

- a. Key professionals provided their views on each child's experience within their current home in all 12 reviews. All of these professionals felt that the children's homes are positive and safe and are meeting the child/young person's needs.
- b. One school raised some issues around communication with the staff at the young person's home and that there have been some issues around uniform being appropriate. However, they said that this is an issue with individual staff members and not the home as a whole. They are generally happy with the home and the care provided to the young person. This was not raised solely as part of this review and was information that was already known and addressed.
- c. Some professionals raised concerns around whether educational settings were appropriate, but in each of these reviews there are actions in place to try to rectify these issues and this was in progress prior to the review taking place.

3.12 Additional

- a. All of the children/young people were seen in their home.
- b. Eight of the children/young people were also seen in school.
- c. The social worker and other key professionals for all 12 children/young people felt that the child/young person was in a safe, good quality Children's Home.
- d. Where safeguarding issues have been raised, these have been appropriately followed up (five of the 11 reviews). These issues had been raised prior to the review and addressed at that time. There is one investigation still ongoing around inappropriate restraint and the member of staff involved has been dismissed.
- e. Three young people have Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards in place, one of which is currently awaiting court review.
- f. Staffing records are in place to ensure staff to child ratios are appropriate and meet the need of the child/young people. One review did not answer this and is being updated.

- g. Outstanding actions from the reviews have been completed for eight children/young people. One young person is still waiting for their annual review and the others did not have any outstanding actions to complete.

4.0 Summary

- 4.1 The reviews were carried out by social workers and health workers as a joint undertaking. Should any concerns for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people have arisen as part of this review, commissioning would have been asked to visit for additional oversight. However, this was not required for any of the reviews completed.
- 4.2 Where concerns have been identified, specifically around education provision, this was previously known (not identified as part of this review) and actions are in place to address these issues. There is one exception to this where concerns for the home's ability to support the young person and his medical needs were raised after the review took place. The health professional did raise a query as to whether the staff in the home minimised the situation during the review and, if not, how things escalated so quickly after the review took place. Health professionals will work alongside the social worker to develop a plan to ensure the safety and wellbeing needs of the young person continue to be met.
- 4.3 Commissioning are aware of the review and the outcome. If quality concerns had been raised, they would have visited. However, this was not required.
- 4.4 This review did not identify any themes for improvement or any actions, immediate or otherwise, that need to be implemented in order to safeguard the children and young people who live in these children's homes.
- 4.5 From the findings highlighted above, Wolverhampton is assured that children who are looked after in children's homes are safe, happy and in good, quality care provisions.

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications as part of this review and the findings.
[JG/07112022/H]

6.0 Legal implications

- 6.1 There are no additional legal implications as a result of this review and the findings. However, this may change depending on the outcome of the one safeguarding investigation that is currently underway.
[SB/12112022/H]

7.0 Equalities Implications

- 7.1 It is important to note that the information provided in this report was accurate at the time the review took place. Needs can change or arise at any time, and should further needs arise, these will be assessed and supported at that time.

- 7.2 Where any child/young person had any additional communication requirements, reasonable adjustments were put in place to ensure that they were able to express any concerns in a tailored way that suited their individual needs.
- 7.3 The children and young people who were part of this review all have complex needs and/or disabilities. CWC takes pride in assuring that children who are in care are treated fairly and that their individual needs are understood and supported. Considering equalities is mandatory in the work that CWC does with children, young people, and families. This review highlights that the needs of the children and young people living in children's homes are currently being met and that they all feel safe and secure in their home.

8.0 All other Implications

Covid-19

- 8.1 There are no longer any Covid-19 measures in place that negatively impact the experience of the children and young people who were part of this review. They continue to benefit from face-to-face visits with professionals, family time, school and other activities.

Health and Wellbeing

- 8.2 The majority of the children and young people who were part of this review would be looked after by Wolverhampton Health Services. Therefore, CWC would be assured that their health needs are assessed and addressed in a timely manner and in a way which leads to positive outcomes. Children and young people who are looked after more than 50 miles from the City of Wolverhampton Council will have their health needs looked after by their local Health Authority. City of Wolverhampton Council will need to ensure that these children have regular health reviews and that their needs are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner in line with CWC expectations.
- 8.3 It is important note that the information in this report was accurate at the time of the review. As health and wellbeing needs can change and arise at any time, CWC will ensure that these are assessed and addressed as and when needed.
- 8.4 There were no known health and safety implications at the time of this review. As with the other implications, this could change at any time and, if needed, will be addressed.

9.0 Schedule of Background Papers

- 9.1 There are no background papers pertaining to this report.