

CYP Scrutiny Committee Briefing 18th September 2012

Areas of Scrutiny:

- For children placed in residential homes, how the quality of the homes is assessed – at minimum the Ofsted rating.
- Quality assurance arrangements (by whom and how) for monitoring the progress and safety of children placed out of borough.

1. Regulatory Body Inspections - Ofsted

The judgements used by Ofsted in relation to registered children's homes are:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Adequate
- Inadequate

Residential Care Homes

In July 2012, the children in residential care were placed in 24 registered care homes. One of those was a secure unit and 4 in independent special schools. Of the residential care homes none of the 24 homes are judged as less than good.

The secure unit is adequate but if placed as a result of a court order then we have to use that provision. The school placements are good but one Welsh school (not Ofsted) does not have a defined rating.

2. Contracting/Commissioning - Our QA actions

All residential care providers and foster care agencies are contracted to the Council via either:

1. A block contract
2. The West Midlands Regional Residential Framework Contract (implemented in May this year)*
3. Spot Contracts using the West Midlands Regional residential Contract
4. The sub regional foster care framework contract (implemented in April last year) *
5. The West Midlands foster care spot contracts
6. Supported Accommodation contracts

*Both of these were subject to recent tenders and as such a comprehensive validation process was undertaken to quality assure the provider and the individual provision using Ofsted reports, financial validation, insurance validation etc. We also carried out our own quality evaluation of the providers as part of that tendering process. Involving Young People

Providers are signed up the West Midlands Database which stores information on the providers including their most recent Ofsted inspections which the providers are asked to upload. As part of our placement process we also double check the most recent Ofsted judgement via the Ofsted website using the homes URN prior to a placement being made. The service providers are also contractually obliged to

advise us of any changes in their Ofsted judgements. All block contracts also have this obligation.

We have two Quality monitoring officers recently appointed who have commenced a schedule of quality monitoring visits to provision. The risk matrix will identify amongst other risk areas the location of the home in relation to distance from the Borough if out of area.

If we have a concern with the standard of provision either through the Ofsted report or through other local or regional intelligence (we have robust links with all 14 West Midlands authorities and share soft and hard intelligence on a regular basis) then we will either contact the provision to follow up/ liaise with our regional partners and the "Lead Authority" or undertake a visit to the home/provider. We will also ask for a copy of the relevant action plan and follow this through. We have an agreed suspensions procedure which we use when we make a judgement that it is not safe to place for any reason.

We have currently suspended use of one foster care agency due to practice issues and organisational management issues and have one suspension with a care home due to financial viability concerns.

3. Role of the Case holding Social Worker

Social Workers have the same responsibilities to children whether the child is placed in residential care, external or internal foster care, or within a pre-adoptive placement. Social Workers have clear professional and statutory obligations and responsibilities for all children and young people in care. There is a statutory written care plan developed in consultation with children and young people, parents, carers and professionals that is subject to regular review. This plan states the aims and objectives of the placement, promotes education and the health needs of young people, and addresses their emotional and psychological needs. It outlines practical contact with family members and, where appropriate, preparation for leaving care.

The key responsibilities of social workers are to ensure that young people are safe, their rights protected and that their care plans are relevant and regularly reviewed. In relation to C&YP in residential care, social workers should:-

- Provide sufficient background information about the child to the residential unit.
- Seek a copy of the last inspection and monitoring report where available. Speak with the Brokerage Team to get their view of the residential Unit.
- Visit the residential unit prior to placement of the child, and check that the unit is suitable for the child in terms of the other young people already there.
- Prepare a care plan as required as the delegated authorised person.
- Make arrangements to hold care plan reviews.
- Ensure that young people and parents are invited and their views are represented during the review and are reflected in decisions.
- Visit the child within statutory requirements.
- Be aware of all significant events involving the child and take appropriate action on receipt of written notifications. These would include self-harm attempts, medical assistance required, criminal activity and others.
- Be satisfied that the child is safe and well cared for in the Unit.

- Keep in regular contact with the child through phone calls and visits.
- Always meet the child or child whose placement you supervise in private, even briefly, to give them an opportunity to express any concerns.
- Make arrangements to visit the child separate from access visits, meetings and reviews.
- Consult with the young people and their families about decisions that affect their life and future.
- Encourage contact with family members taking into account court stipulations and wishes of the children.
- Maintain the original educational placement for the child and ensure educational assessment is carried out if needed.
- Give the child a good understanding of being in care and the wider care system including your role as a social worker and safeguarding responsibilities.
- Know the local process for making a complaint and seek to resolve complaints in accordance with this process.