

## CROCUS FIELDS - CORPORATE PARENTING VISIT

TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 3.00PM

Councillor Tony Marshall and Barry Horne met with Andy (Assistant Unit Manager) for a very positive and enjoyable visit. The timing overlapping with children returning from school enabled us to see the practical application of the ideas and approach that Andy mapped out for us in our discussion.

Crocus Fields is clearly in a different category to children's homes looking after those in care. As a respite centre it provides an invaluable service to families whose daily lives involve intensive care for their children who have (often very challenging) learning needs.

Headline comments include:-

- Highly skilled, responsive and friendly staff (witnessed in their interaction with the children) also level of NVQ level 3 qualification at 100%.
- Scale and layout of accommodation appeared to work well – given high turnover of residents (one weekend in seven and similarly spaced one to two week mid-week stays) obviously means that the children's individual rooms are not personalised but common spaces and in particular in a smaller 4 bed unit direct access to the garden and a light sensory room was clearly being enjoyed.
- The young people we observed appeared to feel safe in their home and clearly the staff were focussed on protection from harm.
- All the young people attended the same schools they would attend from their family homes.
- Extra curricular activities were impressive including active use of Crocus Fields location given its proximity to both the City centre and the Embankment. Andy emphasised their active use of public transport – helpful in preparing for adult life – some of the children were fascinated with the voice of the tram and Andy may follow up and ask us to organise a session/event that could appeal to some of the children.
- Turnover appeared low around 10% and there did not appear to be recruitment problems.

The Meadows transformation aspirations have a direct impact on Crocus Fields (at least the garden given the proposal to open up Arkwright Walk) and Andy confirmed that they had been actively involved in consultation but will need further discussions about the future of the Home as the proposals for the changes to the Meadows (implementation not before 2013) comes forward.

We both felt very positive about the experience and value of the visit and were greatly impressed by the homely environment that a highly committed staff team had managed to create. It was clear to us that as the children arrived "home" they felt happy to be there even though they were out of their normal routine.

Councillor Tony Marshall

Barry Horne

## **Report from visit to Crocus Fields- 7 Sept 2009**

Crocus Fields provides respite care for children with learning difficulties and more recently for children with physical disabilities.

The Home has 11 beds for children aged 8 to 19 years and is divided into 2 units of 7 and 4. The average amount of care provided per child is 52 days a year.

Crocus Fields only has a small number of children who are currently 'looked after' who may be in the care of foster carers.

It also provides outreach work such as a sitting scheme, a family support service, support to 23 foster carers and a linking scheme with young people from the community.

During term time the children attend their usual schools, most attending Shepherd, Rosehill and Woodlands special schools.

The children have access to lots of activities whilst there, such as horse riding, music festivals and the cinema, they also get involved in local community groups such as the Meadows Community Garden.

I noted that in line with the City Smiles project that dental care is being given a high profile.

I was told that the staff team is pretty stable and prefers to use its own relief register of staff.. Both units have 3 staff on night duty, all staff have enhanced CRB checks as you would expect.

Standards are set for all staff, within a 6 month timescale from starting they are expected to work towards a level 3 NVQ, the national standard for this is presently 80% Crocus Fields is 97%..36% of the staff have an equivalent Social Work qualification.

Core training includes child protection, lifting and handling and health and safety, the rest of training is identified through PDRs and may involve 4 day per year.

It is apparent that as more children are coming though with more complex needs that training will evolve to cater for this.

I would like to thank the officer in charge for his help and time on this visit.

Councillor Ginny Klein

## **Visit Report – 23 Vivian Avenue, Nottingham**

**Date of visit:** 9 September 2009

**Visitor:** David Cooke, Business in the Community

**Host:** Kay Sutt, Unit Manager

### **Description of the home**

This “Hard to find” home is set back within a mixture of residential and commercial property on Vivian Avenue. The large Victorian building contains 6 independent flats, accommodating 16-18 year-olds who stay for 6 – 9 months as a supported transition to independent living.

There are 14 staff who, under the leadership of Kay Sutt, support the young people. They invariably arrive with a variety of ‘high needs’. The centre has a reputation for making great progress with young people at risk of self harm. There is a waiting list for young people to move into Vivien Avenue and this is the only home of its kind in the City.

### **Impressions**

For a 100-year-old building, the space works remarkably well. The home is in very good condition. It is clean, tidy, well cared for. When I asked about who keeps the place so clean, Kay said that the cleaner was on long-term sick leave and so her staff team have taken it upon themselves to keep it clean.

Kay has a committed, experienced and highly qualified team. She is passionate about her work and rightly proud of her team and the service they provide. This view is reinforced by the last two Ofsted reports which have rated the service as outstanding.

I did not have the opportunity to meet any of the service users. I was surprised by the lack of communal areas for the residents to spend time together. Kay explained that this was designed to encourage the young people to develop relationships outside of the home. This would help with the transition to fully independent living.

### **Opportunities**

As ever, Kay has to manage a tight budget. She is unable to have recycling bins on site without having to pay additionally for this service. Despite being home to the 6 young people, the premises are classed as a business and would be charged for having a recycling bin. As we help prepare young people for independent living, it would seem wholly appropriate to be modelling the good practice of recycling.

With only 6 beds available, there is more demand for the service than can be met on site. Alternatives include hostels and private sector accommodation. However, these alternative places are often less well-equipped to manage the particular behavioural and emotional needs of some of the young people. Kay has a vision to create a

couple of satellite homes nearby, supported and managed by the existing team at Vivian Avenue. This could ultimately be a more cost-effective delivery model with a greater level of support than would be afforded these young people elsewhere.

The home has a good sized, secluded front garden which the young people like to use. It would be easy for BITC to engage some local business volunteers to do a garden make-over. Kay showed me some recent refurbishment undertaken by Tesco staff. I will put a colleague in touch with Kay to make this happen.

I understand that the City is undertaking a review of the service to Care leavers. Kay described how young people who move on from Vivian Avenue tend to return when in need. Her team are always pleased to provide support if they can – albeit informally. She expressed concern for other young people who may not have developed the same relationships and who find it difficult to access help outside of working hours. I do not know enough about the current system to comment. I simply reflect a concern that was voiced.

### **Conclusion**

The visit to Vivian Avenue gave me an invaluable insight into the service, the issues and opportunities. I am grateful for the time afforded me by Kay. And I am full of admiration for the work carried by Kay and her staff.

David Cooke  
Regional Director  
Business in the Community