

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015**

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| <b>Title of paper:</b>   | <b>Regulation 44 Visits (formerly regulation 33) Nottingham city council internal children’s residential homes including short breaks unit. Quality assurance visits of non regulated internal semi-independent homes.</b> |                            |
| <b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>                         | Helen Blackman, Director – Children's Social Care, Vulnerable Children and Families.<br><a href="mailto:Helen.Blackman@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Helen.Blackman@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a>                                     | <b>Wards affected:</b> All |
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| <b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>                   | N/A  |                            |
| <b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)</b> | 13 May 2015  |                            |

**Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:**

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| Cutting unemployment by a quarter   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Cut crime and anti-social behaviour   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Help keep your energy bills down  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Good access to public transport   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Nottingham has a good mix of housing  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs                       | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events         | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Support early intervention activities   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):**

Regulation 44 (formerly regulation 33) of The Children’s Home (England) Regulations, 2015 require monthly visits to be completed to all children’s homes and units run by a local authority or independent registered children’s home provider by a person referred to as a Reg 44 visitor previously known as a Reg 33 visitor not employed at the home nor directly responsible for it.

The visitor must compile a written report of their findings, which must be submitted to the Registered Responsible provider and ofsted within 4 weeks of completion of the visit.

The purpose of the regulation 44 visits is to ensure that all the children and young people within the placement are being appropriately cared for and that their individual assessed needs are being met in line with their care plans and (England) Regulations and standards 2015.

This is achieved through a combination of:

- a) Examination of all appropriate written records and reports with particular reference to daily logs, significant event and notifiable incidents including any complaints or compliments received. Before an inspector can read a child or young person’s file they must have written or verbal consent from the child or young person themselves. In the case of a child or young person with complex disabilities where communication is not possible permission must be sought from parents/carers.

b) Interview children/young people, parents, relatives other professionals and staff as they feel necessary to establish the standard of care being provided.

The independent person must produce a report about a visit and form an opinion as to whether the children/young people are effectively safeguarded and the conduct of the home promotes children's wellbeing.

The independent persons report may recommend actions for the registered manager to take in order to improve the general running of the home.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board and other relevant professionals including colleagues from human resources, Nottingham city homes, placements service and our internal commissioning team are included on the Rota managed by the Service Manager.

In April of last year Nottingham City council's semi-independent children's home was de-registered with ofsted in order to provide a more tailored and relevant service to young people leaving care. The unprecedented move included the opening of a further 3 bed semi-independent home for care leavers. This also served as a considerable cost saving to the council. It involved close partnership working with Nottingham city homes which has culminated in the council being able to offer value for money and a less expensive alternative to private provision. Since the home was de-registered outcomes for young people have continued to improve in general and young people have successfully been prepared to move into accommodation of their own. The project has been so successful that in October of last year Nottingham City Council and Nottingham City Homes won the Chartered Institute of Housing's Innovation of the Year Award for their partnership working in working together in providing excellent accommodation and vital support to vulnerable young people at a critical stage in their lives. Again in April of this year MJ Awards judges commended the project for its innovation in social care. More recently a journalist from Community Care contacted Nottingham City Council as they were so interested in what the city had achieved through their partnership working with Nottingham City Homes in terms of the accommodation for children and care leavers that they intend to publish an article in the near future.

In April of this year managers from our internal residential service received training in order to carry out monthly quality assurance visits on all four of the councils semi-independent homes, the aim being to further improve the service as well as ensure that the accommodation for our care leavers is of the highest quality and standard and that sufficient safeguards are in place and suitable for the young peoples needs. During their quality assurance visits Managers will check running records, health and safety compliance, reports, pathway plans as well as speaking to young people, social workers, parents/carers and personal advisors to ensure that they are receiving a good, safe and appropriate service. The visitor will also check the fabric and decor of the buildings and homes to ensure that they continue to be of good and excellent quality. Once the visit is concluded a report will be produced by the visitor and will be passed to the Service Manager for Residential and Targeted Support and Head of Service for Children in Care to scrutinize and ensure that they are being run as efficiently and effectively as possible and that the homes are operating to a good and safe standard. The report will also go to the managers of the semi-independent homes as visitors can and will make recommendations for further improvement as well as commend what is working well.

For private providers of semi-independent accommodation for Nottingham city care leavers our internal placement service carries out quality assurance and compliance visits.

**Recommendation(s):**

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| 1 | To support continued involvement and recruitment of relevant independent professionals |
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|   | undertaking Regulation 44 visits and to welcome member's involvement in quality assurance visits of unregulated semi-independent homes for care leavers. |
| 2 | Corporate Parenting Board to continue to receive regular updates in respect of outcomes of visits.   |

## 1.1 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the nature of the provision it is imperative that the service is scrutinised independently to ensure it is delivering cost-effective services and improving outcomes for Children in Care. People carrying out Regulation 44 and quality assurance visits on our semi-independent homes can make recommendations to improve practice as well as ensuring in our regulated children's homes that 2015 regulations and standards are being adhered to and that children are effectively safeguarded and that the homes are conducted in a way that promotes their well being.

Since April 2011 Regulation 33 Visits have been undertaken in all the Children's Homes within Nottingham city's internal Residential provision.

In the last three months Reg 33 and 44 Visitors have identified recent performance issues such as:

Various documents needing to be updated and signed by staff, refreshers for staff in training for food hygiene and first aid, all staff needing to have internet/computer awareness training, staff to be more creative in encouraging young people to pursue hobbies and interests and various paperwork needing to be updated.

Each visitor formulates an Action Plan which is completed by the Registered Manager and checked by the visitor on the next visit. Recommendations/Action plans have continued to be varied due to having a good mix of visitors who are from different professional backgrounds which has continued to serve to improve how each of the homes operate.

Ofsted look closely at reg 33/44 reports and use the content during their inspections to check that action plans have been addressed by the Registered Manager and staff team. Ofsted continue to be rigorous with their ofsted ratings. This April has seen the launch of the new standards and regulations which aims to further drive and support improvement and raise expectations by setting even higher standards of performance and effectiveness of children's homes as well as provide a sharp challenge and incentive to act where improvement is needed.

Currently Nottingham City council runs 7 registered homes which include a short breaks unit. Ofsted have rated one of our homes as outstanding, three as Good with Outstanding features, two as Good and one as Adequate which we are working hard to get to Good.

The Reports continue to be very positive with 33/44 visitors describing the Homes as generally small and cosy, well maintained, nicely decorated with a very homely feel. Staff in the homes are described by the visitors as offering young people personal and individual care and of acknowledging young people's interests and identifying ways for them to further pursue those interests to build upon their potential.

One visitor wrote "there seems to be a relaxed and honest dynamic in the home where the

children's views are actively sought. Sanctions are not frequently used; the staff try to use alternative interventions through key work sessions, motivational methods and placing appropriate responsibilities back on the children for the management of their own behaviour".

Another visitor in their report wrote "it is evident that the staff do try to ensure that the young people are able to contribute to the running of the home and aspects that impact them on a daily basis". Another visitor wrote "From my perspective I think the young people within the home are safe and well and they have a team of workers that want the best possible outcomes for them. They continually celebrate their achievements to assist in the increase of their self esteem".

Reg 33/44 visitors as part of their role contact parents/carers, relatives and social workers for their views on the care their child is receiving from the home or short breaks unit. Parents on the whole are very complimentary about the care their child receives. One parent whose child accesses the short breaks service told the reg 33 visitor that she was happy with the quality of outcomes for her disabled child. The same inspector observed strong relationships between staff and parents.

A grandparent whose child was in a long term home recently told an inspector that her granddaughter on the whole was pretty impressed with the staff at the home, finding them to be very helpful and communicative and feels they are doing their best in sometimes unsettling circumstances.

One social worker told a visitor "the care and support given to the young person I work with is excellent, the staff maintain regular contact with them, giving regular updates. They support her cultural/emotional needs. They are very nurturing and constantly trying to safeguard her".

Young people too are very complimentary about the care they receive in the homes with hardly any complaints. Young people when asked by the inspectors say they feel that the staff care and have been responsive, helpful and attentive to their needs. Young people generally feel well supported by the staff. Often young people say they don't want to ever leave the children's homes. Some children say that although they like living in the homes their hearts are set on returning back home to their parent/parents. They are also aware of how to make a complaint should they not be happy about anything and have access to an independent advocate.

Managers receive regular supervision and Operational Management meetings take place on a monthly basis with Development days taking place quarterly where any current issues or relevant themes/ongoing issues are raised and discussed. The management team within residential have a vision for the next 12 months and beyond for both their individual homes and the Residential Service as a whole. As a team they are united in their strong and passionate vision to further raise the standards of care they offer to the city's most vulnerable children and young people.

The levels of missing young people continues to fluctuate in the two short term homes depending on the young people placed. The long term homes generally have very few missings as young people are more settled. Each home has an individual policy on steps to take to prevent young people from going missing in the first place in line with the children's homes amended Regulations which came into force in January 2014.

Young people's access to Education and Employment is improving all of which is recorded in the Regulation 33/44 Reports. The majority of our young people in our semi-independence homes and long term homes are in some form of work or education.

Staff continue to work very closely with the virtual head in supporting our children and young people in school and ensuring that educational packages are put in place for those children who don't currently have a school placement. Staff have high aspirations for the children and young people and achievements are celebrated as a matter of high priority. In September of last year the City Council held an awards ceremony in which most of our young people attended and received a certificate of achievement for which they were extremely proud.

## **2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)**

Residential services since April 2011 have been re-configured into a Small Group Homes Model which is an umbrella term. The specifics are set out below:

There are 10 settled beds in 4 Children's Homes including a 4 bed home for children and young people with complex disabilities, 7 Emergency beds over 2 homes in the Bestwood area and an increase from 12 to 16 Semi-Independence beds within the last year (6 Sherwood Rise, 4 and 3 and 3 in NCC 3 transition houses in the NG7 area). Our Short Breaks Unit continues to offer 11 beds for children and young people with disabilities.

Regulation visits and quality assurance visits are an important quality assurance process and also serve as a safeguarding measure for children in care and care leavers. They are able to inform practice and performance and ensure young people have access to someone independent, should they need to complain or disclose information about the care and service they are receiving.

Regulation 33/44 visits are also a legislative requirement and completed reports are sent to Ofsted on a monthly basis. Reports will also be sent to the social worker or to the team manager of a child who lives in the home.

Quality assurance reports are sent to the Service Manager, Service Head and the managers of the semi independent homes to aid scrutiny for further development and improvements.

## **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

None Required.

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)**

The re-configuration of Children's Residential continues to be cost effective for the City Council. Internal beds remain cost effective currently in line with or lower than external provision. Also the increase in internal beds prevents some young people from being placed outside of the city as it is good practice wherever possible to keep children and young people near their family, friends, school/ college and within the city they have grown up in and are familiar with.

## **5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS)**

Regulation 33/44 reports include legislative requirements (amended to meet new regulations and Standards, April 20015)

Record and capture information in relation to young peoples offending and anti-social behaviours.

They also report as to whether young peoples cultural and diversity needs are being met within their identified Care Plan.

**6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Has the equality impact been assessed?

Not needed (report does not contain proposals or financial decisions)

**7. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION**

N/A

**8. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

N/A