

## Corporate Parenting Panel

29 November 2019

### Report on the Progress of Durham County Council In-House Residential Provision



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## Report of Claire Morris Strategic Manager for Children Looked After Resources, Durham County Council

### Electoral division(s) affected:

County wide service provision for Children Looked After by the Authority.

### Purpose of the Report

- 1 The report provides a high-level overview of Durham County Council's in-house children's residential care provision and plans for future development of residential resources.

### Executive Summary

- 2 Durham County Council currently has nine children's homes, one of which is a disability short break care service for children and young people, with a tenth home planned to open in 2020.
- 3 Work is currently underway to:
  - (a) Review the remit of one of its current homes;
  - (b) Relocate one home to a new property in a similar location;
  - (c) Open a new tenth home;
  - (d) Review occupancy rates within the short break provision for disabled children;
  - (e) Review revenue costs in line with the proposal for further home;
  - (f) Continue to invest in and develop the service to ensure it remains fit for purpose; meets regulatory standards and delivers on our ambition to provide outstanding care to our children and young people.

### Recommendation

- 4 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
  - (a) Note the content of the report.

## **Background**

- 5 Currently, Durham County Council has nine local authority children's homes, with the tenth home due to open in 2020 and one disability short break care service for children and young people.
- 6 Between three and five young people live in any one home which means we can support up to thirty-two young people across Durham County Councils in-house residential children's homes. Young people moving in and moving on are monitored through the weekly placement and resource panel (PRP). Where the plan is for young people to continue to live in the children's home this is reviewed as part of the child's looked after reviews.

## **Proposed developments of in-house provision**

- 7 The work is planned to be completed in stages. A number of elements are to be reviewed as part of phase one, these being Tow Law, 9 Cedar and the new home.
- 8 Further work is required to ensure the remit for the children's homes are meeting the needs of the current young people in their care and the needs of young people entering the care system. This work has commenced and has started with a review of the remit of one home. It is anticipated that this review will have concluded by September 2020.
- 9 It is proposed that one home will develop a new service offer and will move from a five bedded children's home to a short break and out reach provision. This service will look to work directly with young people aged 8 to 17 who are currently looked after or in the process of becoming looked after or returning home. Residential staff will work alongside their colleagues from the Supporting Solutions Service and Fostering as well as key partners. Its focus will be on supporting placements from breaking down and support young people to remain at home where the offer is not one of crisis intervention but that of longer-term involvement and support. The offer from this new service needs to complement existing services offering planned care and support over a short (6weeks plus), medium- or long-term basis.
- 10 It is proposed to relocate one home from its current site into a newer property in a similar locality. As part of this planned move the home will maintain its purpose and function of a children's home offering support for young people aged 11 and 17 on a medium to long term basis who require support to better manage behaviours which challenge. As part of this move the home will move from a four-bed home to three bed-home, which is in line with Durham's policy and best practice. It is anticipated that the move is concluded by May 2020.

- 11 Development of the tenth home has commenced. A potential new property has been identified. In line with the increased need for residential support for younger people this home will be registered as a three bedded home to support young people aged 8-14 where support is needed to manage behaviours which challenge. It is anticipated that this home will be ready from July 2020.
- 12 The short break care service for disabled children and young people can support up to six young people at any one time with additional capacity to support one young person in an emergency. Further work is required to fully understand the current capacity levels to ensure we are supporting the right young people with the right level of care and to ensure maximum occupancy in line with the safe and appropriate matching of young people.
- 13 The service is currently exploring the option of developing and opening an eleventh home and a full options appraisal will be concluded by December 2019.
- 14 Work with commissioning colleagues to review the offer from the external market will also take place during phase one and as we move into phase two.
- 15 In addition to the above activity, over the next twelve months we are:
  - (a) Continuing to develop the ICT skills of the residential team in preparation for the introduction of a bespoke residential recording module within liquid logic.
  - (b) Scoping out the potential benefits of moving all children's home polices across to Tri-X model of care.
  - (c) Developing the training and support offer across residential care.
  - (d) Continuing to support staff wellbeing and ensure they have access to appropriate training and professional development.
  - (e) Implementing a new quality assurance framework.
  - (f) Working alongside the inspire team to improve the use of and availability of ICT solutions and undertake work to streamline current processes.
  - (g) Ensure good understanding of expectations of the Children Homes regulations, quality standards and grade descriptors.
- 16 As part of progressing next steps, all activity outlined in this report will continue as planned. This will include identifying which homes are to be reviewed as part of phase two. Phase two will commence Autumn 2020.

**Background papers**

- None

**Other useful documents**

- None

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Children Act places responsibility on Local Authorities to ensure they have regulated provisions for Children Looked After. The Children Home Regulations 2015 provides the legal framework for the type of provision and its standard.

### **Finance**

Purchase of the homes will come from the sale of 9 Cedar. All revenue costs will be met from existing budgets.

Failure to achieve the changes outlined in this report will result in out of area children homes being procured for Durham's young people, this will result in an increased budget pressure as these provisions tend to be more expensive in comparison to in house provisions.

### **Consultation**

With respect to the re-location of 9 Cedar and the purchase of the Sacriston property full consultation with members and residents will be undertaken.

With respect to the Tow Law provision consultation with members, stakeholders and children and their families will be undertaken.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

There are no equality or diversity issues arising from this proposal.

### **Climate Change**

There is no impact upon climate change resulting from this proposal.

### **Human Rights**

There are no human rights issues arising from this proposal.

### **Crime and Disorder**

There is no additional impact upon crime and disorder resulting from this proposal which is not already factored in when considering the impact of a children's home within a local area. Ongoing work with police will continue as part of the ongoing meetings with the locality police teams and strategic police teams.

## **Staffing**

There will be minimal impacts upon staff as a result of this proposal. Vacant posts will be used to move people from one home to another to ensure their skills are aligned to the right home.

## **Accommodation**

There is an element of risk posed by the re-location of 9 Cedar and the opening of the Sacristan Property. This risk is in respect to the resident's objection of a children's home within their local area. Equally there is a risk of Durham's young people not being able to live in their home town due to objections to new homes.

## **Risk**

All risks are outlined in this report. Failure to achieve the actions outlined in this report will result in increased financial pressures and potentially a risk for Durham in relations to its statutory obligation to provided care for Children Looked After.

## **Procurement**

There are no risks relating to the procurement regulations.