

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Children and Families Advisory Panel
Date:	11 June 2019
Title:	Overview of Hampshire County Councils' Children's Homes
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Recommendation

1.1. That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the update provided in this report regarding the provision and quality of residential care for Children Looked After within each of the Children's Homes.

2. Summary

2.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the provision and development of residential care for children and young people provided by Hampshire County Council.

3. Contextual information

3.1. The Residential Strategy that was agreed in 2014 set out a vision for Children's residential care, namely that it should be a placement of choice, based on effective assessment of need and careful matching and that the provision and standard of care should not be less than expected from a large family home. The strategy has two main strands; the quality of the environment (the buildings) and the quality of the staff.

3.2. To improve the quality of the buildings it was agreed that four of the homes would be replaced with six new homes and that The Mead in Odiham and Cypress Lodge in Basingstoke would be retained. Children were fully consulted about the design of the new homes and felt that they should look the same as other family homes.

3.3. The second strand to the strategy, quality of staff, necessitated robust recruitment and management of staff and the embedding of an agreed model of practice. The key theoretical underpinning to the residential strategy was the implementation of an Emotional Warmth Model of Professional Child Care ('The Pillars of Parenting'). This model sets out to empower those working with children

with the knowledge and skills to understand and respond appropriately to the emotional, behavioural and attainment difficulties that are exhibited by the children in their care. The model is fully embedded, and its application is facilitated via monthly consultations led by a psychologist.

3.4. The following provides an overview of current provision and service development.

3.5. Overview

3.6. Hampshire County Council now provides eight family homes for 33 children and young people aged between 10 and 18 yrs. old. Each home provides places for up to four children except for The Mead which has five places. In addition, the Council provides a respite unit (Firvale) in partnership with Health for disabled children aged 5-18 and their families.

3.7. The homes are mixed gender, small, safe and non-institutional and are in the centre of communities allowing children to stay close to their family and friends whenever this is right for them. The additional capacity also enhances the prospect of children who need to be Looked After remaining in County and allows the Authority to exert greater control over non-county spend/ provision – which may not be of the same quality.

3.8. At the time of writing, 24 of the 33 placements within the eight homes are occupied (73%) and 43 children receive programmed social or health care from Firvale.

Occupancy								
Amani	Berry View	Candle Lodge	Ferne Lodge	Crofton House	Abenrise	The Mead	Cypress Lodge	Total
4	2	2	4	3	4	5	0	24

3.9. Under-occupancy, where it applies, reflects staff vacancies in the main and there are actions to address this.

Staff Vacancies								
Amani	Berry View	Candle Lodge	Ferne Lodge	Crofton House	Abenrise	The Mead	Cypress Lodge	Total
1	3	0	0	1	0	1	3	9

3.10. Amani- Dibden Purlieu

3.11. This purpose-built home which opened in June 2017 has four places for children and young people and is fully occupied.

3.12. Amani is in the centre of a residential community with easy access to local amenities. The downstairs areas consist of a large kitchen, sitting room, dining

room, laundry room and quiet room. Upstairs there are four young person's bedrooms, and two staff sleep-in rooms, all have en-suite facilities. In common with the other homes, all rooms, including the bedrooms are furnished to a very good standard and the premises are well maintained.

3.13. Three of the children have a full-time school placement. Attendance for one child is 100% and a second child's attendance is 80%. Efforts to sustain and improve attendance for these two children are at risk of being undermined by a third child's infrequent attendance (this is being addressed in conjunction with his school) and the absence of a Special School placement for the fourth child who is receiving an interim education package while a placement is sought.

3.14. Incidents of aggression have been comparatively high (19 in April 2019) and concern the child who is without a school placement. This young person is being supported to manage his emotions appropriately with minimal use of physical interventions and without the need for police involvement. Incidents are reducing, and a further reduction is anticipated when he engages with CAMHS and accesses school.

3.15. None of the children abscond and there are no safeguarding concerns, bar one female child who is being supported after an isolated incident of self-harm.

3.16. Amani is Outstanding.

"The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care". (Ofsted -September 2018).

3.17. **Berry View – Andover**

3.18. This purpose-built home opened in July 2017 and is surrounded by a good-sized private garden and located close to amenities. Designed and built to the same specification as other 'new builds' the home is modern, spacious and warm.

3.19. Two children live in the home (two young people recently moved to supported lodgings in accordance with their Care plans). Occupancy is currently reduced due to three vacant posts (two are conditionally offered) and two long term absences (sick leave). An acting manager is overseeing the home in the absence of the registered manager (maternity leave).

3.20. One child has a full-time education placement and has achieved 96% attendance. The other child has part time provision supplemented with home tuition to support her with GCSE revision.

3.21. Incidents are infrequent and there have been very few missing episodes (April 2019). However, one child recently formed an inappropriate and unsafe relationship with two males whom she contacted on line and absconded to Durham to meet them. This was disrupted by staff who travelled to Durham with

the child's social worker and returned this young person to the home. The evident risks of exploitation of this young person are being managed in conjunction with the social worker and relevant agencies with oversight from the Missing and Exploited Team (Willow) and senior management.

3.22. In common with other homes, relationships with neighbours are good. One child has formed a friendship with a child living opposite and will regularly visit her home and receive return visits to, what is, her home.

3.23. Berry View is rated Good

“Staff offer nurture, guidance and boundaries. One said, ‘We see the children as individuals and are not easily defeated: if one approach doesn’t work we will come up with alternatives.’ This sums up the home’s character and approach”. (Ofsted – July 2018).

3.24. Candle Lodge – Chandler’s Ford

3.25. Candle Lodge is a purpose-built home built on the same large site as the home which it replaced (The Greenhouse). The home has offered placements for up to four children and young people since June 2017 and has been maintained to a very high standard. Each child is supported and encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and children are consulted when redecoration takes place.

3.26. Two children live in the home and following recent staff appointments the manager and team are ready to receive additional children, (staggered and matched to the needs of the children already living in the home to maintain the stability of each placement).

3.27. Both children have school placements and their attendance is extremely good (100%). One young person presents with very challenging behaviour and has assaulted staff. He is being supported by CAMHS and the staff team – without the need for physical interventions. Neither child has been absent or missing and there are no safeguarding concerns.

3.28. Candle Lodge is Outstanding.

“Children make excellent progress in all areas of their lives and this is a real source of pleasure for both staff and children. Examples are numerous and include children developing much healthier diets, better sleeping patterns and improved communication and social skills. For some children, sitting at a table and eating a meal together as a family, or opening a library account and choosing a book, are significant achievements”. (Ofsted – November 2018).

3.29. Ferne Lodge – Fareham

3.30. Ferne Lodge opened in 2017 and mirrors the design of the other ‘new builds’. It is situated a short distance from the Fareham Town Centre within a village which has shops and local amenities.

3.31. Four children live in the home. Three are attending school (with attendance at 74%, 85% and 98% respectively) and one child is being reintegrated into full time mainstream provision. Placement plans address attendance where needed.

3.32. Incidents are infrequent (four in April) and behaviours are generally managed and supported without the use of physical restraint (one physical intervention in April). Children at this home do not abscond and there are no safeguarding concerns except for one child who has received unwelcomed contact from an adult sibling who presents significant risks to children. A multi-agency risk management plan has been devised by the social work team, police, probation service, school, and home to keep this child safe.

3.33. Ferne Lodge is rated Good

“Well-trained staff understand the importance of helping children recover from past trauma. Multi-disciplinary support with a focus on supporting staff to develop positive and safe relationships with children is exemplary”. (Ofsted January 2019).

3.34. **Crofton House – Havant**

3.35. Crofton House opened in July 2017 and follows the design of the other homes. It is in the heart of a busy community and has been properly cared for and maintained. Small but important ‘finishing touches’ such as wall art and furnishings provide a homelier environment which meets the needs of the children and, like the other homes, any damage is repaired without delay.

3.36. Three children live in the home and a fourth child has recently visited to meet with the children and staff with a view to moving into the home before the end of the summer school term.

3.37. Two children have a school placement and have achieved 100% attendance. A suitable placement is being sought in conjunction with the Virtual School for the third child (placed on 15.4.19).

3.38. There have been no incidents, including incidents of restraint, for several months. Absences are unusual, however, one child who recently came to live in this home has been absent on four occasions. This young person is ‘pulled’ (rather than pushed) away from the home by her peers and family. Staff are continuing to build relationships with her to retain her and keep her safe.

3.39. Crofton House is Outstanding

“Young people make excellent progress while living in this home. Their self-regulation, social presentation, emotional well-being, independence, education, health and family relationships all improve”. (Ofsted March 2019).

3.40. **Abenrise – Winchester**

3.41. Abenrise, which is the last purpose-built home, opened in December 2018. The design and layout of the home follows the other homes bar slight

modifications made in light of the occupancy and use of those earlier builds. The home is in a quiet residential area and surrounded by a garden.

3.42. Two of the four children who live in the home have achieved 100% attendance at school. Incentives are in place to improve a third child's attendance (44%) and the Wessex Dance Academy is being explored as part of an engagement plan. A fourth child who came to live in the home in May has been placed in school.

3.43. Incidents are uncommon except for one child (7 incidents in April) who can behave aggressively when frustrated and who is being supported by CAMHS and the staff team to regulate his emotions. This is being managed without the need for restraint.

3.44. Children do not go missing from this home and there are no safeguarding concerns bar one male child who alleged that he had misused medication (unconfirmed following hospital treatment) and who is now attending group therapy provided by CAMHS.

3.45. The manager and children at Abenrise recently took part in a Radio 4 programme about the issue of criminalisation of children living in children's homes. It is commonly found that children in care are 'criminalised' for behaviour that would not be dealt with by the criminal justice system if displayed by children within their family home. The children told the Radio 4 reporter about their positive experiences of living at Abenrise and confirmed that the police were rarely called to deal with their behaviour.

3.46. The home is due to be inspected shortly by Ofsted for the first time since opening.

3.47. **The Mead – Odiham**

3.48. The Mead provides emergency and/or short to medium term residential care and assessment for up to five young people. The home, which is fully occupied, was refurbished in 2012 to provide a homelier environment.

3.49. Each child is engaged in education. Whilst a fourth child is being supported to improve her attendance (82%), overall attendance is good (91% to 100%).

3.50. Incidents are infrequent (one in April) and children do not go missing from the home. There are no safeguarding concerns in respect of the children, however, one child is being supported after reporting to have engaged in self-injurious behaviours driven by a need to connect emotionally with staff. This same child is also considered to be at risk of exploitation and is closely supervised with oversight by the Willow (Missing, Exploited and Trafficked) team.

3.51. The purpose of the home is to determine the right permanent placement for the child and, therefore, maximise placement stability. Options that are explored in consultation with the child, their family and social worker include reunification with

their own family where appropriate, foster care or long-term residential care. However, the model of short-term assessment placements is not yet embedded due, in part, to the Care Plans of three of the children (long term residential care) who are all 15 years old. One young person will move to independence in June following her 18th birthday and foster care is being considered for the youngest child (12yrs.).

3.52. Following inspection in May 2019, The Mead Requires Improvement to be Good. This reflects: the timeliness of management reviews of restraint records, (reviewed but not evidenced sufficiently); the robustness of pre-employment checks for one member of staff, (this has been addressed and there are no safeguarding concerns); and shortfalls in staff training records. In addition, a young person was able to watch an age-inappropriate film (this has been addressed through parental controls on access).

3.53. Cypress Lodge – Basingstoke

3.54. Cypress Lodge underwent considerable refurbishment in 2009 to provide accommodation for four young people within a modernised and warm interior surrounded by landscaped outdoor areas. The house has been maintained to a good standard.

3.55. Cypress Lodge (four beds) has been unoccupied since May 2018 after a succession of resignations (and a retirement) and unsuccessful attempts to recruit suitable staff. Following targeted campaigns, appointments have been made and three remaining vacancies have been conditionally offered. However, two candidates have yet to accept and there is a risk that the recruitment to one or both of those posts will be unsuccessful. In addition, three vacant posts need to be filled at Berry View (two are offered) to release Cypress Lodge staff who are temporarily deployed to that home.

3.56. Firvale

3.57. Firvale forms part of the overall service provided by Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Hampshire County Council to support children with disabilities.

3.58. Children who access the health care facilities of this service will have complex needs, which may include severe and, in some cases, life limiting physical disabilities. Children who access the social care facilities may have learning disabilities and less profound physical disabilities with behaviour that can be challenging. At the time of writing 28 children access the five social care respite placements / beds at Firvale and 15 children access the four health beds.

3.59. Following inspection in April 2019, Firvale Requires Improvement to be Good. In addition to the need for the newly appointed manager (April 2019) to evidence regular staff supervision and effective monitoring of placement plans, this requirement primarily reflects the need to install hinge and window guards.

3.60. In addition to local action plans to meet the necessary improvements to be rated Good, (The Mead and Firvale), steps are being taken to improve performance monitoring across the residential service, (see 'Next Steps').

3.61. **Workforce**

3.62. Staff vacancies across the eight homes and Firvale, (12 in total /10% of the workforce), are being managed proactively with dedicated support from recruitment and marketing colleagues. Managers are ensuring that applicants know what to expect from the role and the advertised 'offer' includes an opportunity (and expectation) to complete the Council's Higher-Level Apprenticeship in residential child care (containing the necessary qualification for residential staff) where this is not already held. In addition, to reduce the use of agency and casual workers to an absolute minimum and enhance the quality of care, recruitment and retention a Business Case submitted to the Children & Families Management Team (CFMT) to recruit an additional member of staff per home has been agreed. Improving overall occupancy and opening Cypress Lodge is not dependent on this increase.

3.63. The proportion of work hours lost through sickness is low (1.98% in April 2019). Although full compliance with sickness recording needs to be assured, an overall reduction is an expected outcome of the residential strategy.

3.64. **Quality of Care**

3.65. The lived experience of each child in each home and their progress continuous to be monitored and evaluated both internally through management oversight and governance and externally via monthly Independent Visits to the home (Regulation 44 visits) and by Ofsted. Each child has a success story and the examples below are unique to the child but are not atypical:

JD was so shy we had to coax him into the home - he spent the planning meeting hidden behind a cushion. Although he had attended the same school for four years he had struggled to make friends and he had never been to a birthday party or a friend's house for tea. In 2018 he finished school and attended his leaver's prom with three friends – they signed his shirt and leavers book too. Starting college in 2018 was a huge deal for JD as he was worried about losing and having to make new friends. He went to his first birthday party last month and had his best friend here for his first sleepover last week, (Abenrise).

EC was placed with us in May last year. She had a history of violence towards staff and absconding and was at high risk of CSE. She absconded to London twice in her first week. We worked with EC around the risks of absconding and used our relationships with her to encourage her to make the right choices. We showed EC that we wouldn't give up on her, no matter how much she tried to push us away. EC has not absconded for almost a year, she has worked with us to build her relationships with her family, improve her behaviour and go to school. She is about to sit her GCSE's and we have contacted a local travel

agent for work experience because that's what she wants to do in the future. She has grown into a very likeable, mature young lady and we are very proud of her, (The Mead).

4. Next Steps

4.1. To increase the proportion of homes graded Outstanding the residential service is to receive dedicated support from Children's Services' Performance Management Team in aligning performance monitoring more closely with Ofsted's inspection framework. In addition, service governance is to be reviewed to ensure closer oversight of performance by CFMT.

4.2. Additional imperatives are as follows:

- maintaining an excellent standard of accommodation for children;
- recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce;
- maximising occupancy (Cypress Lodge); and
- developing a model of assessment and care planning (The Mead) to improve placement stability;

5. Conclusion

5.1. Hampshire County Council continues to provide high quality care for the children it looks after in homes that are suited to the needs of children, homely and maintained to an excellent standard. The children living in the homes are safe and are achieving. In the small number of cases where there are concerns regarding the welfare and safety of a child, appropriate steps are being taken to ensure that they are safeguarded.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1 Not Applicable.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed, impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Not Applicable.

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

Not Applicable.