

# **Children and Families Scrutiny Committee**

## **Agenda**

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**Date:** Tuesday, 7th September, 2010  
**Time:** 10.30 am  
**Venue:** Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,  
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

### **PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT**

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declaration of Interest/Party Whip**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests and for members to declare the existence of a party whip in relation to any item on the agenda.

3. **Public Speaking Time/Open Session**

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For any apologies or requests for further information, or to give notice of a question to be asked by a member of the public

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A total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to make a statement(s) on any matter that falls within the remit of the Committee.

Individual members of the public may speak for up to 5 minutes, but the Chairman will decide how the period of time allocated for public speaking will be apportioned, where there are a number of speakers.

Note: In order for officers to undertake any background research, it would be helpful if members of the public notified the Scrutiny officer listed at the foot of the agenda, at least one working day before the meeting with brief details of the matter to be covered.

4. **Review of Residential Provision** (Pages 1 - 126)

To consider the report of the T&F group

5. **Macclesfield High School and Macclesfield School Review** (Pages 127 - 146)

To receive an update on the Macclesfield High School and Macclesfield School Review

6. **Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contract, Referral and Assessment Arrangements within Local Authority Children's Services** (Pages 147 - 154)

To consider a report of the Director of Children's Services.

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

### **Children and Families Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 7 September 2010  
**Report of:** Task/Finish Group  
**Subject/Title:** Review of Residential Provision

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#### **1.0 Report Summary**

- 1.1 This report encloses the final report of the Task/Finish Group who conducted a Scrutiny Review of Residential Provision.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 (a) the report of the Scrutiny Task/Finish Group be welcomed and supported;
- (b) the recommendations of the Group be endorsed, and referred to the Cabinet for consideration and necessary action, and that Cabinet be invited initially to comment on the details of the recommendations;
- (c) the response of Cabinet be considered by the Scrutiny Task/Finish Group in due course;
- (d) the Scrutiny Task/Finish Group be requested to keep progress under review, and to report further on the implementation of the Report's recommendations in 12 – 18 months time.

#### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 To progress the findings of the Scrutiny Review Task/Finish Group which are aimed at ensuring that residential provision in Cheshire East provides good standards of care for our Cared for Children and young people.

#### **4.0 Wards Affected**

- 4.1 All

#### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 All

#### **6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health**

- 6.1

## **7.0 Financial Implications**

7.1 Not known at this stage

## **8.0 Legal Implications**

8.1 Not known at this stage

## **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 Not known at this stage

## **10.0 Background and Options**

- 10.1 The Children and Families Scrutiny Committee on 6 July 2009 resolved to set up a Task/Finish Group to investigate current and future residential provision in Cheshire East.
- 10.2 The aim of the Scrutiny Review was to examine existing provision and make recommendations about future provision, to ensure the best care was available for the Borough's Cared for Children.
- 10.3 The Group held 5 meetings and examined a range of information including a review of residential provision conducted by an independent consultant, Jill Thorburn. This provided a good source of background information for members of the Group.
- 10.4 Members of the Group also went on visits to existing provision, including two new homes in the Borough that were on the verge of opening. Members were also able to visit some foster carers in their own home, who provided short break respite care for children with complex needs. Members were also privileged to meet some young people who were members of the Children in Care Council. These young people were articulate in their views about what children in care should expect and what should be expected of them. Their views helped inform this review.
- 10.5 The review has looked at physical buildings and considered various sources of information including statistical information such as numbers of Cared for Children and where they come from. However, when considering provision for the future, paramount in the Group's minds was what type of provision will provide the best care for the children of whom all members are Corporate Parents.
- 10.6 The final report lists a number of recommendations which the Task/Finish Group commends to the Committee. Members will note that the recommendations contained in the Executive summary do not accord with those in the body of the report. This is because the Executive summary contains a number of alterations resulting from discussions held between the Chairman of this committee, the Head of Children and Family Services and Chairman of the Task and Finish Group. The Chairman will take Members through the changes at the meeting.

#### **11.0 Access to Information**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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## **Review of Residential Provision in Cheshire East**

1. Chairman's forward
2. This review of the residential provision in Cheshire East looked at the inheritance from the former Cheshire County Council (CCC). After Ofsted inspections had found that the two CCC residential homes in the east of the county did not meet their standard.
3. CCC had started a process of change, but this was at an early stage and the Task/Finish Group was set up to look at the changes being made and recommend any future changes to the residential provision for looked after children and young people
4. The Task/Finish Group was drawn from Cheshire East Council's Children and Families Scrutiny Committee.
5. I would like to thank Councillors D Flude, M Simon, D Beckford, J Goddard for their hard work and diligence in carrying out the work. We had one aim to always look for what is best for the children.
6. I would also thank the members of "The children in care council" for their candid and very helpful contribution, the team from the Together Trust at Wilkinson House who gave us an opportunity to look at other ways of provision.
7. To help us carry out the work we relied on the Cheshire East children and families team lead by Paul Mossman whose interim work had been very thorough.
8. Thanks are also due to Denise French for her excellent administrative support.
9. We commend our work to the Cheshire East Cabinet and request they give it full and fair consideration.

**Councillor David Neilson**

**Vice Chairman, Children and Families Scrutiny Committee**

10. Introduction

11. When Cheshire East came into existence on 1 April 2009 it inherited a pattern of residential provision that was to some degree already in the process of changing and improving. An independent consultant, Jill Thorburn, had also already been commissioned to review residential provision.

12. The Children and Families Scrutiny Committee on 6 July 2009 decided that a Task/Finish Group should review current residential provision and make recommendations about future provision. A Group was therefore established with the following Terms of Reference:

13. "To review and examine current residential provision for young people for 11 – 17 and make recommendations as to future residential provision for Cheshire East children".

14. The Membership of the Group is:

Councillor David Neilson (Chairman)  
Councillor Darryl Beckford  
Councillor Dorothy Flude  
Councillor John Goddard  
Councillor Margaret Simon

15. The Group commenced work in November 2009 with the aim of reporting to the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee in summer 2010.

16. The Group met on 5 occasions and received written and oral evidence from a number of officers, the Group also carried out a number of visits to existing facilities and met with the Children in Care Council (a full list of meetings and visits is attached at Appendix 1).

17. Executive Summary and Recommendations

18. In 2005 Cheshire County Council undertook a Scrutiny Review of Residential Provision with a focus, in Cheshire East, on Redsands near Crewe and Priors Hill, Macclesfield. The conclusion was that neither were fit for purpose and the model of care was no longer appropriate. The County Council purchased 2 properties in the Crewe area to replace Redsands and these properties were in the process of being furnished and staffed as this Scrutiny review began.



19. The Group has had the opportunity to visit all existing provision as well as the two new homes in the Crewe area and this has been a very useful exercise. These visits plus information from officers and Jill Thorburn's report provided the basis for the Group's work. The Group also received valuable first hand information from members of the Children in Care Council.
20. The current and future focus for residential provision appears to be towards smaller units in established residential areas and the Group supports this direction of travel. Members have heard how the new units will achieve a homely and ordinary feel and about measures put in place to ensure high quality staffing arrangements. A lot of the concerns raised through Ofsted inspections of Redsands and Priors Hill have already been addressed, which the Group welcomes.
21. To continue and build on the changes already introduced the Group recommends that a further two properties is purchased in the mid or north of the Borough. This will enable a more even distribution of provision across the Borough; this is important to enable children to remain near their home location and help to maintain existing relationships and schooling arrangements.
22. The previous arrangement of having an emergency bed, currently not in operation, must not be reintroduced as this simply feeds the care system and does not produce the best outcomes for children. The removal of the emergency bed, along with the introduction of an assessment bed, has enabled a more planned approach to be adopted for children and young people coming into the care system. This is commended.
23. There are clear advantages to in-house residential care placements but early closures of Priors Hill units and Redsands have depleted the authority's ability to make such placements. The way forward is to expand the capacity of the new bed units but this needs to be done cautiously. There is clearly a shortage of in-house beds currently, particularly in the north of the borough, but the full extent of the shortage will not be clear until every single outplacement has been reviewed ( a time consuming exercise) and the present uncertainty regarding the number of children being taken into care has been resolved. It is also clear from the experience within the Crewe units that commissioning such units requires time and capacity if the right staff are to be put in place and the right atmosphere is to be established. Providing two additional 4 bed units immediately making a total of 4 altogether , would seem to be justified as a first step, given that this will still leave the authority with less in-house beds than it inherited in April 2009. A review in say 12 months time could then be made to establish if the provision of additional units is needed.

24. Overall the Group feels that there have been a number of positive changes introduced in the residential service which must now be given time to establish and therefore a period of stability is important. Past issues have largely been addressed and the Group feels the Council is now in a position to run its own in-house provision together with some partnership working with existing partners (the Together Trust).

25. The full list of recommendations is below:

1. **That in view of the changes and improvements already made in the residential service and so as to introduce a period of stability and certainty the provision of residential care in Cheshire East, should remain an in-borough service either through directly managed establishments or by commissioned establishments. Out of borough placements should be minimised.**
2. **That the model of care at Priors Hill (a large institutional type building) is not suitable as a residential home for children and young people and that the model be not replicated in the future.**
3. **That the Priors Hill building and site be sold and the resultant capital receipt is ring-fenced to provide funding for replacement residential provision located in the mid and/or north of the Borough.**
4. **For similar reasons as Priors Hill that the Wilkinson House premises be sold and the resultant capital receipt is ring-fenced to provide funding towards new residential facilities.**
5. **That all future residential provision be based on the small residential units (around 4 bedrooms) model. In addition the specification should ensure that each new house has one bedroom and common facilities flexible enough to be used by either an abled child or by a child who uses a wheelchair.**
6. **That two properties are purchased (and modified), one in the mid part of the Borough and one in the north, to be used as residential accommodation for Cared for Children along the same lines as the two existing properties in the Crewe area. The properties should be situated in an established community near to local facilities.**
7. **That the Council gives favourable consideration to continued working with the Together Trust. The recommendation to close Wilkinson House is entirely a reflection on the premises rather than on the performance of the Trust.**

Final

8. That the concept of an assessment bed be supported and that the one of the beds in one of the two new homes be reserved for this purpose.
9. That just before the new homes are due to open a local community engagement strategy be developed to inform the local community and reduce the likelihood of any negative publicity or speculation.
10. Cared for Children in residential homes should have access to possessions and facilities that are available to most children within their own family such as their own door key and the ability to have friends round for tea.
11. That the questions of consistency of access to possessions and facilities in foster care should be reported to the Council's Corporate Parenting Board for them to consider the need for any modification to current guidance.
12. Cared for Children in residential homes should have access to a computer to enable them to participate in modern methods of communication (with a safe format) and to help with studying. The Council's Corporate Parenting Board should be asked to consider the need for a change to current guidance to foster carers on this subject.
13. All cared for children in residential homes over the age of 10 should have their own mobile phone for safety reasons. A regular and reasonable top up should be provided. The Council's Corporate Parenting Board should be asked to consider the need for a change to current guidance to Foster Carers on this subject.
14. That all Cared for Children should be placed within a family setting wherever possible and that sufficient resources are targeted at the fostering service to ensure sufficient capacity is available.
15. That Cheshire East Council should seek to ensure as stable a workforce as possible within its children's homes so as to enable continuity with the children and the opportunity for relationship building.
16. That recruitment to residential care services should always be through a robust process and Warner style safer recruitment methods should be used. Any organisation commissioned to organise residential services on the Council's behalf should also be required to comply with the recommendation.
17. That an on-going training programme and an appraisal system be implemented for all staff working in residential care to ensure staff development and knowledge is kept up to date and monitored.

Final

- 18. That short break provision for disabled children should cease to be provided in the Langley Unit at Priors Hill. Although the service is viewed as good the physical environment is not suitable and not the model of care the Council should be aspiring to provide. Full consideration of short break provision should be covered under the Aiming Higher review.**
- 19. That emergency beds should no longer be made available. Emergency provision should be provided through outreach workers or emergency foster carers.**
- 20. That regular summaries of reports and recommendations made under the regulation 33 visit programme should be submitted to the Children & Families Scrutiny Committee. This is considered to be the best way for the committee to have its finger on the pulse of the residential services.**

## 26. The Position at 1 April 2009

27. Cheshire East Council came into being on 1 April 2009 and inherited the following children's residential homes:

- Redsands near Crewe – a purpose built 12 bed unit for children aged 12 to 18 in two units of 6;
- Priors Hill, Macclesfield, a purpose built facility comprising the following Units:
- Langley Unit - providing 6 short break beds for disabled children aged 8 to 19;
- Alderley Unit - providing 6 beds for children aged 12 to 18;
- Mottram Unit - providing 2 emergency beds for children aged 12 to 18;
- Kerridge Unit - providing 2 short break beds for fostered and adopted children requiring respite for children aged 8 to 19.

28. Cheshire East also manages a contract (which runs until March 2011) with the Together Trust. The Together Trust manages Wilkinson House, Sandbach, which is a 6 bed unit providing 3 beds each for Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester for children aged 8 to 12.

29. A Scrutiny Review carried out by Cheshire County Council conducted in 2005 concluded that the model of care provided at Redsands was no longer fit for purpose and care could more appropriately be provided in small 4 bedded homes. In Cheshire East two such properties were purchased (by the County Council) in the Crewe area. Redsands was closed in April 2009.

30. Priors Hill – the Scrutiny Review of 2005 also considered that this facility should be replaced in principle but no action was taken due to Local Government Reorganisation. The Langley Unit is run as a separate unit but the other three Units are run as one due to staff working across the Units as required. The Mottram Unit closed in April 2009, the Alderley Unit closed in December 2009 and currently only the Langley Unit remains open.

31. Ofsted inspections of Redsands and Priors Hill in 2009 judged both as "inadequate". This was in part due to the physical state of both properties but in relation to Priors Hill the Inspector remarked that "The building is not fit for purpose and Cheshire needs to move away from large group homes" and "the external of the building is tired". The Inspector also commented that staffing levels were poor and there was a general feeling of apathy.

32. The Group reviewed the Ofsted Inspectors' reports of both Redsands and Priors Hill along with both the Ofsted Report and Statement of Purpose for Wilkinson House as a starting point for its work. The Ofsted Reports and Statement of Purpose are attached as Appendices.

33. Throughout the period of the Scrutiny Review, the in-house residential provision was changing and developing and the Group was kept updated as these changes happened. However, this did make the Group's work challenging as Members were dealing with a frequently changing situation.

34. Independent Review of Residential Provision

35. A consultant, Jill Thorburn, was commissioned to undertake a review of residential placements for Cheshire East Council. The "Residential Childcare Review" was a comprehensive look at provision over a two year period 1 June 2007 – 30 June 2009. The review looked at various aspects of the residential service including demographic information, placements, current provision (Priors Hill, Wilkinson House and the 2 new homes in the Crewe area), outcomes of children in residential care, feedback from the Children in Care Council, good practice recommendations and future provision.

36. Jill Thorburn attended two Group meetings and presented her findings to Members. She felt that residential provision in Cheshire East was out of date and practices were institutionalised. She made a number of recommendations including the closure of Priors Hill and a review of the contract with the Together Trust and the provision of an assessment function at Wilkinson House. She had also proposed that, because the in-house provision at Redsands and Priors Hill had been deemed inadequate, Cheshire East's residential provision should be outsourced. However, she recognised that since her report was researched and written there had been a number of significant changes and improvements introduced in the residential care service in Cheshire East. She advised the Group that she now felt that Cheshire East Council could run residential provision for children and young people as an in-house service.

37. Conclusions

38. The Group found Jill Thorburn's report a useful basis for discussion and a number of issues highlighted in her report are addressed below. The Group did note that some issues had already been addressed and that the report was based on a situation that had changed and improved in a number of areas. The Group believes

that Cheshire East now provides a good in-house residential service. The Group also feels that it is important for a period of stability to take place in the residential service in the light of all the recent changes, developments and improvements that have occurred. Once the changes have had time to establish, it may then be appropriate to look at the service again.

### 39. **Recommended:**

That, in view of the changes and improvements already made in the residential service, and so as to introduce a period of stability and certainty, the provision of residential care in Cheshire East should remain an in-house service.

### 40. The current provision of Children's homes

#### 41. Priors Hill

42. This is a large detached two storey building on the outskirts of Macclesfield in fairly large grounds. The building has been separated into units providing different types of care (as listed above). At the time of the Scrutiny Review, only the Langley Unit was operational. The Group has received Ofsted reports from 2009 both of which rated the home as inadequate. Jill Thorburn noted that the material standards at the home were not acceptable with old and tatty furnishings and dirty and stained carpets with few home comforts. She felt the building was unsuitable for a children's home and the prevailing culture was of an institution. She agreed with the earlier Scrutiny Review that Priors Hill is not fit for purpose and supported its closure.

43. Members of the Group visited the home in 2009. They noted that the building was large and looked like an institution rather than a home. There were a number of corridors and doors which were often locked. The Langley Unit was in a better decorative state than the other units. There was a large garden. However, the overall effect was not welcoming and homely and Members agreed that large impersonal buildings are no longer suitable for children's residential care.

#### 44. Conclusions

45. Priors Hill is unsuitable for residential care due to its large, impersonal and institutionalised nature. The building should be declared surplus to requirements and sold to enable replacement provision in new home(s) along the lines of the two homes in the Crewe area.

**46. Recommended:**

1. That Priors Hill is sold and the resultant capital receipt is ring – fenced to provide replacement residential provision (two homes) located in the middle and/or north of the Borough;
2. The model of care at Priors Hill (a large institutional type building) is not suitable as a residential home for children and young people and is not replicated in future.

**47. Wilkinson House**

48. This is a large house on the outskirts of Sandbach that is owned by Cheshire East Council and run by the Together Trust (a voluntary sector not for profit organisation). The house is a large detached property set in its own grounds. The House has 6 units and the Council has a contract with Cheshire West and Chester Council to share provision equally. The provision is registered to provide for children aged 8 – 12 years old on admission.
49. Its purpose is to prepare children to live within a family environment. The philosophy includes a belief in keeping sibling groups together wherever possible both during their time at Wilkinson House and afterwards. The provision also includes an accessible unit.
50. The Group received the Ofsted report which judged the overall quality rating as good (June 2009). Some Members of the Group went to visit Wilkinson House and noted the spacious facilities including a large kitchen-diner, play room, lounge and individual bedrooms with adequate bath and shower rooms.
51. Members were advised that Wilkinson House now accepts children aged 10 – 14 years on admission. It focuses on direct work with children, many of whom have experienced multiple foster placement breakdowns and need one to one support. There is fairly high therapeutic provision. The Ofsted inspection of June 2009 judged the provision in relation to making sure the children are healthy as “outstanding”.
52. Jill Thorburn noted in her report that there was a strong education ethos at the home. Members who visited were advised that all children who live at the home go to school and there are good relationships between staff and schools. Members also noted the good range of activities available to the children.
53. Over the time period of the review, Wilkinson House has had a number of vacant beds, however, at the time of the Members’ visit, it was full.



54. Officers advised the Group that one of the Cheshire East beds was currently being used as an Assessment Bed where a child could stay for a period of around 3 -6 months to enable a thorough assessment by all relevant agencies to assess their needs and then match this to the most suitable provision. Members of the Group support this provision as it helps to ensure the most appropriate placement and care planning for each child based on their individual needs.

#### 55. Conclusions

56. The Group feels that provision at Wilkinson House is good and supports the provision of an accessible unit at the home. The change in use of one of the units to an assessment bed is seen as appropriate and is endorsed. The change in age on admission from 8 – 12 to 10 – 14 is also seen as more appropriate as the Group feels that a child below the age of 10 should be placed in a foster care setting rather than a residential care home.

57. Members noted the significant changes occurring in residential provision in the Borough and felt that it was important to try to maintain some stability and continuity where possible and to continue to work with partners where provision and outcomes are seen to be good.

58. However, the size and location of Wilkinson House is seen as less suitable when compared with the new provision in the Crewe area of small units in established communities near to facilities. The Group has noted that at the time of the review all the children resident in Wilkinson House were not from the immediate local area which reflects the concentration of residential provision in the southern part of the Borough and the lack of residential provision in other parts.

59. It was also uncertain whether the provision will remain viable if Cheshire West and Chester were to withdraw from the contract in 2011.

#### 60. **Recommended:**

1. That Wilkinson House is sold and the resultant capital receipt ring fenced to provide an alternative home in the middle or north of the Borough;
2. That officers liaise with the Together Trust to seek their views on continuing to work with the Council to provide some residential provision in another building in the middle or north of the Borough and such provision should be for children aged 10 years or above;
3. The provision of an assessment bed is supported and should continue to be provided in any new unit.

#### 61. Cared for Children population

62. The Cared for Children's population is increasing nationally as well as locally. At March 2010 there were 440 Cared for Children in Cheshire East, an increase of 85 in one year. There has been a significant increase in children in the younger age groups although the older age group (11 years onwards) was more likely to be looked after in residential homes:

63. Ages	64. March 2009	65. April 2010
66. 0 – 4	67. 95	68. 133
69. 5 – 10	70. 70	71. 108
72. 11 – 15	73. 124	74. 131
75. 16 – 18	76. 66	77. 68
<b>78. Totals</b>	<b>79. 355</b>	<b>80. 440</b>

81. Research based evidence and Lord Laming, who has reviewed services for children, suggest that the best outcomes for Cared for Children are achieved through foster care rather than residential placements. However, for some children, foster care is not appropriate and so a certain level of residential provision will always be needed. The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requires local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient suitable accommodation within their area.

#### 82. Conclusion

83. The Cared for Children's population is a changing picture and a mix of foster care and residential care is needed. Although foster care would be the first choice for a cared for child, this will not be suitable for all children and a certain amount of high quality residential provision is needed.

#### 84. Demographic and statistical Information

85. The Group used Jill Thorburn's report to look at placements over a two year period from 2007 – 2009. During this period 58% of placements made were to in-house residential provision. 33% of children were placed in out of borough residential placements and 9% were in mother and baby care placements (there are no mother and baby foster placements available in Cheshire East and only private external provision is available – the Group has not included consideration of the provision of mother and baby placements within its remit).

Final

<b>86.Placement Type</b>	<b>87.March 2009</b>	<b>88.March 2010</b>
89.Homes and Hostels	90.25	91.19
92.NHS/Health Trust	93.1	94.1
95.Residential School	96.4	97.9
98.Residential Accommodation	99.0	100.8 (sanctuary seeking young person)
101. Residential Care Home	102.1	103.1

104. Over this timescale, the majority of children in in-house care provision came from the Macclesfield area (50%), with 15% from Congleton and 35% from Crewe. This may in part be explained by the emergency bed (see below) being located in Macclesfield and children entering the in-house care service through that route. Of those children placed in external care home provision, 35% came from Macclesfield, 35% from Congleton and 29% from Crewe.

105. The mother and baby placements showed the majority of children coming from the Crewe area (60%), with 10% from Congleton and 30% from Macclesfield.

106. Taking all these figures together the report suggests that between 30 - 40 % of children looked after in residential care in Cheshire East are from the Macclesfield area. Figures from December 2009 suggest a high number of children from the Congleton and Crewe areas and a lower rate from Macclesfield. However as there is provision of 8 beds in the Crewe area this suggests a need for some residential provision in the north of the Borough.

107. Jill Thorburn also looked at the numbers of Cared for Children at any one time and noted that at April 2009, out of a care population of approximately 400 children, 26 were residing in residential care homes. This represents a percentage of 6.5% of children being cared for in residential homes compared with the national average of 13% of looked after children being in residential care.

108. Of these 26 children, 20 were placed in residential units in the local authority and 6 were in care outside of Cheshire East – either residential schools or residential homes with on-site schooling, privately run care homes or in Cheshire West and Chester residential care homes.

109. During the two year period of Jill's review there were 60 placements of children within residential homes in Cheshire East. Priors Hill had 43 children over the two year period, Redsands had 11 and Wilkinson House had 6. During this two year period there were 104 residential placements in total – 60 to in-house placements, 34 external residential placements and 10 mother and baby placements. The Group has received information about independent Children's Homes in Cheshire East, all of which have had good inspection outcomes (as judged by Ofsted) although it is noted that not all the children in these homes are Cheshire East children.
110. In March 2010 there were 38 children and young people in residential placements compared with 31 in March 2009.
111. In view of the numbers of children requiring residential placements in Cheshire East, it would appear that the current provision of two 4 bedded homes in the Crewe Area and 2 beds available at Wilkinson House, is inadequate.
112. It is also important to note that there are a number of children placed outside of the Borough which may be due to lack of availability as well as lack of suitable provision. The Group has been made aware of costs of placements both to in-house and external provision. The Group has been advised that all external placements are to be reviewed as to their appropriateness. Once this review has been completed, a further assessment may need to be made as to how much residential provision is needed within the Borough and what type of provision this should be. It may be that some specialised provision would not be appropriate or financially viable as an in-house service but the review will ascertain this picture more clearly.
113. It is also relevant to note that Cheshire East is below the national average in terms of numbers of Cared for Children in residential care and this is a positive position to be in. However, if numbers of Cared for Children in residential care in Cheshire East were to increase to nearer the national average, then there would be a greater shortfall in provision. Taking into account that the figures in the report are based on all the available current information, the Group concurs with Jill Thorburn's assessment of the need for more residential provision in the Borough.
114. Conclusions
115. Given the increase in numbers of Cared for Children, there is under provision of residential care in the Borough. The Group believes that more provision is needed and that this should be located in the middle and/or north of the Borough in 4 bedded units in an established residential area along the lines of the homes in the

Crewe area. This will enable a more even geographical spread of provision which will enable Cared for Children to be located in a placement as near to their home as possible, provided that this is appropriate for the child. Any out of area placements should be for specialised provision only.

116. **Recommended:**

That two properties are purchased in the middle and/or northern part of the Borough to be used as residential provision for Cared for Children along the lines of the two existing properties in the Crewe area – in an established community near to local facilities. One house should be run as an in-house service and the second may be appropriate for the Together Trust to run as a replacement provision for Wilkinson House.

117. Two new homes in the Crewe area

118. Two properties had been purchased by Cheshire County Council in the Crewe area of Cheshire East to replace existing residential provision at Redsands. The properties each provide 4 single bedrooms for young people together with appropriate living accommodation, bathroom facilities and an office and staff sleeping in facilities. One of the properties has been adapted to provide a bedroom and access to all of the ground floor for a young person in a wheelchair. The aim of the houses is to have a homely feel and not feel institutionalised. Jill Thorburn noted that two members of the Children in Care Council who visited the new homes commented positively – “They both feel like a home. Not a big ‘I’m in care’ building! They looked fresh and nice and ‘normal’” and “They are so much better than what we have now.”

119. The Group has welcomed the move towards children’s residential care being provided in small houses in residential areas rather than being in large residential units with an institutionalised look and feel. The Group has visited both of the new homes - one house is a large detached house in an established community surrounded by other family type houses. It has a large garden area with open play areas nearby and is within walking distance of a town centre. The other house is a modern home in a cul de sac, again with plenty of garden area and within walking distance of the town centre. Both houses are well served by local schools.

120. The Group commends both the homes for their ordinariness and homely feel and the opportunities for the young people living there to experience domestic style living. One of the comments contained within the Ofsted report dated 1 July 2009, following inspection of Priors Hill residential home, was that arrangements at Priors Hill did “not promote domestic style living” and do not “encourage children

and young people to feel “at home””. The Group feels that these two homes are a positive start to better residential provision in Cheshire East and should be replicated.

121. Bedrooms in the two new homes are designed as “blank canvasses” to enable them to be personalised and were viewed by Members as welcoming. Any office equipment would be kept to a small area away from domestic living areas to emphasise the homely nature of the building. Members were advised that residential staff would sleep during the night and would not have “waking nights”; this was seen as an important way of contributing to the normality of the home. Mealtimes will be shared experiences and young people will be encouraged to participate in cooking and domestic chores as other children would be expected to do as being part of a household. This will also be a way of learning independent living skills, again as other children and young people will learn who live with their natural parents.
122. The Group has been advised of the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of one of the new homes, which was judged as “good” (April 2010). The inspection noted that the young people living in the home “can easily access community facilities such as public transport, schools, colleges and shops”. The home was judged as being “effectively managed” with staff who are “experienced and qualified”. The majority of staff hold a relevant professional qualification and all staff were committed to continuing professional development and attended on going training events. The home was viewed as giving a “good standard of care” to the young people and “positive relationships” had been formed between staff and young people.
123. The environment of the home was judged as “comfortable and homely” with young people “encouraged to personalise their rooms”. The young people were given a mobile phone to make and receive calls and were also able to use the house phone. Education was seen as important and an incentive scheme used to encourage young people to benefit from education or training opportunities. Young people had access to a computer as well as a wide selection of books.
124. The Group noted that there had been some adverse publicity when the new homes in the Crewe area had opened. There had also been expectations among some young people currently resident in other homes in Cheshire East that they would be moving into the new homes. It was important that in future any new homes that opened must be subject to a carefully planned engagement and publicity strategy so that the transition was handled proactively. Young people affected by home closures and the development of new homes must be kept fully aware of exactly how the changes would affect them. The Ofsted inspection of one of the new homes had noted that the

home strived “to make good relationships with neighbours and the wider community”.

125. Conclusions

126. The two homes in the Crewe area are commended for their location, facilities and physical environment. This is a model that should be replicated in any future residential provision. The provision of an accessible unit is commended. The Group welcomes the positive Ofsted inspection report which shows how a number of the issues highlighted in this report appear to have been recognised and addressed. It is now important that this good provision is used by and for the young people of Cheshire East at the earliest opportunity.

127. However, the Group does believe that having two homes based in the Crewe area may not be appropriate or viable in the future as there may be too much of a concentration in the south of the Borough. If the Group was recommending provision from the beginning, Members may have recommended just one home in the Crewe area.

128. **Recommended:**

1. That all the beds in the two new homes in the Crewe area are utilised as quickly as possible.
2. That all future residential provision is in small residential units (around 4 beds) and not large institutions and consideration should be given to ensuring that one unit in each new home is accessible for children who use a wheelchair or whose mobility is compromised.
3. When a new home is due to open a local community engagement strategy must be developed to inform the local community and reduce the likelihood of any negative publicity or speculation.

129. Children in Care Council

130. The Group met some young people representing the Children in Care Council. The Children in Care Council is comprised of young people who have experience of care services.

131. The young people who met with the Group were either currently in the care of Cheshire East Council or had recently left care. They had experienced a range of types of provision including foster care, respite care and residential care. They were positive about the existence of the Children in Care Council as it is a valuable forum to share experiences and discuss issues and ideas with people who were in similar situations.



132. Their individual experiences of the care system varied greatly with positive experiences including opportunities to undertake activities and experiences that would not have been possible with their natural parents and increased personal confidence due to feeling supported by carers. However, there were also examples of frequent moves between placements which caused upset and distress and lack of communication as to why moves were required. It was suggested that a speedy move could be welcomed if the child or young person was upset with their current placement.
133. The relationship between a child or young person in care and their social worker was seen as an important one that needed time to build up in terms of knowledge and trust. There appeared to be inconsistency around how often social workers visited and a feeling sometimes that their focus was on paperwork rather than the child or young person. Some children or young people could view a visit by a social worker/professional as a source of anxiety because they expected them to be bringing bad news.
134. The Group asked the young people what they thought is important for a young person in residential or foster care to have in terms of facilities and possessions eg TV and DVD in their own room, access to a computer etc and what they thought a young person in residential care should expect – eg to have friends for tea, sleepovers, front door key etc.
135. The young people felt strongly that a child who was in a foster family should have access to all the same things that the child(ren) in the foster family have, for example a television in their own bedroom, laptop and internet access, (taking into account safeguarding needs), the ability to have friends round and their own door key. A child in residential care should also be able to access these things, as any child living in their own home would do.
136. The young people thought that it was vital that each Cared For Child/young person has a mobile phone, not just for communication, but for safety reasons and that the phone is kept regularly topped up (as a parent would do). They accepted that sanctions should apply if a phone or personal television was destroyed as this would help with learning about consequences. If a Cared for Child is able to have their own personal items, such as a television, they are more likely to look after it as they feel more attachment and have more respect for it because it is their own. The Panel heard of an example whereby young people living at Priors Hill had been able to go shopping to choose their own television. They welcomed the possibility of choosing an item for themselves because it felt more personal; one young person explained how she still had her television even though she had left care a number of years ago.

137. It is also important that foster carers and residential staff recognise the importance for young people of modern communication methods such as text messaging and social networking and that Cared for Children are able to access these in the same way that other children and young people do, ie if age appropriate and within a safe format. This has benefits in enabling Cared for Children to feel the same as other children and young people and was particularly important to help them to maintain relationships even if moving placements and locations.

138. Members valued the opportunity to hear from young people who had direct experience of the care system and were grateful to the young people for allowing them to attend one of their meetings. The Group felt that it would be useful for Members to hear from the Children in Care Council on a more regular basis as this would assist them in their corporate parenting role.

139. Conclusions

140. Cared for Children must be able to experience normal family life as much as possible whether in a foster home or residential home. This should be achieved by Cared for Children being able to have all the possessions and facilities that children living in their own homes enjoy and expect. They should also have regular access to the internet for educational reasons and to help with maintaining relationships and a mobile phone of their own with regular top-ups provided for them.

141. **Recommended:**

1. There should be consistency of access to possessions and facilities in foster care so that foster children are treated the same as other children within the foster family;
2. Cared for Children in residential homes should have access to possessions and facilities that most children expect within their own family to include their own door key and the ability to have friends for tea;
3. All Cared for Children should have access to a Computer to enable them to participate in modern methods of communication (within a safe format) and to help with studying;
4. All Cared for Children should have their own mobile phone for safety reasons with a regular and reasonable top-up provided.

142. Fostering

143. Although the fostering service was not within the remit of the Group, Members were aware that residential provision could not be looked at in isolation and it was important to look at the whole picture in terms of provision so as to ensure the best care is available to Cared for Children. The Group has received information on numbers of children placed with foster carers – at 28 February this was 230 placed with foster carers and 66 placed with foster carers (relative or friend). This was out of a total figure of 430 Cared for Children.

144. In line with the redesign of Children's services, the Group supports the use of foster carers rather than residential care as this is more likely to achieve better outcomes for the Cared for Child. Members would also aspire to all children having a home in a family setting. However, the Group recognises that for some children this will not be possible or suitable, in which case residential provision will always be necessary.

145. The Group has been advised about training and support to foster carers and the importance of following up swiftly any initial expressions of interest from potential foster carers.

146. **Recommended:**

That all Cared for Children should be placed within a family setting wherever possible and that sufficient resources are targeted at the fostering service to ensure that there is a good supply of foster care to access when needed.

147. Staff at residential homes

148. The Council inherited a large number of staff in its residential service. This included a number of casual and agency staff. This made continuity of care difficult and made it more difficult for Cared for Children to build and maintain relationships with their carers.

149. Both Ofsted and Jill Thorburn noted issues around staff in terms of staff behaviour, training and recruitment processes. The Ofsted report of Priors Hill noted "not all staff employed at the home are appropriately vetted and assessed as suitable individuals to work with young people. Recruitment procedures are not robust enough and staff files are not maintained in line with schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 1991". J Thorburn noted that staff at Priors Hill "appeared to be largely unaware of their professional caring role" and "overall the staff appear to be poorly trained". In two lengthy visits she noted only "one positive interaction between a staff member and a child".

150. The Group has been advised that immediate staffing issues have been addressed in some measure and the numbers of staff

have now reduced from 103 in 2009 to 47 in April 2010 partly through the cessation of temporary and agency contracts.

151. The Group has been made aware of the recruitment process for both new residential homes and that this has been by a rigorous and lengthy process including “Warner” interviews (safe recruitment practices). One of the Group Members has investigated this process and met with members of the recruitment team to learn about the interview process in some detail. The Group has been advised that the recruitment process used to staff the new homes is being viewed as good practice and other Local Authorities and care provider organisations are seeking information and training on the process used in Cheshire East. The Group has been advised that the Together Trust who run Wilkinson House are also looking to put their staff through this “Warner” style recruitment process. This is encouraging and commended.

152. Conclusions

153. Good staff in residential homes are vital and this can be achieved through robust recruitment procedures and on-going training. Once staff are recruited there needs to be time and energy spent in developing a caring and supportive culture within the residential service and good leadership must be introduced and maintained. There needs to be a core group of permanent staff to ensure continuity and if staff are well trained this should enable more children to remain in the area rather than having to access costly out of area placements.

154. **Recommended:**

1. That staffing at residential children’s homes must be mainly provided through a core group of permanent staff to enable continuity and the opportunity to build relationships;
2. That recruitment to residential care services should always be through a robust process and Warner style safer recruitment methods should be used; in addition, the Council should only use care providers whose recruitment is through a “Warner” style process;
3. That on going training and appraisals must be implemented for staff working in residential care to ensure staff development is kept up to date and monitored.

155. Short break service

156. There is currently short break provision in Cheshire East at the Langley Unit, Priors Hill. This Unit is predominately used for short breaks for children with disabilities and additional needs. J Thorburn noted that the environment was materially better than the other Units at Priors Hill, bedrooms were nicely decorated and there were higher standards of cleanliness. Staff seemed to engage well with the children. Members of the Group visited the Unit as part of their visit to Priors Hill. They felt the service provided at the Langley Unit was good although the physical environment was poor due to its large and impersonal nature that appeared more of an institution than a home.
157. The Council also uses foster carers just outside the Borough to provide a short break service for children with disabilities and additional needs. Members of the Group visited this provision and met the foster carers who showed them round their home and explained the type of care and activities they provided for the foster children. Members of the Group were very grateful to the foster carers for welcoming them into their home and appreciated the time taken for the visit which they found very useful. They commended the service as a model of good practice.
158. The Group was advised that provision of short breaks was currently going through a major review in line with the process around Aiming High for Disabled Children.
159. Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC) is a central government programme to help disabled children, young people and their families to get the support and chances they need to live ordinary lives. The government needs to ensure that the funding for AHDC is allocated to a family's specific wants and needs; families have described short break opportunities as their key priority.
160. Short breaks come in a variety of formats and each one can last from just a few hours to a few days and occasionally longer. They include day, evening, overnight and weekend activities and can take place in a community setting, the child's own home, the home of an approved carer or a residential setting. They provide disabled children and young people with enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers, thereby contributing to their personal and social development and reducing social isolation. They can also provide parents and families with a necessary and valuable break from caring responsibilities.
161. The Council has sought expressions of interest from organisations around how alternative respite provision might be delivered. It is expected that expressions of interest will be for non-residential services in which case a replacement unit for residential short break provision will be needed. The Group noted the importance of short break provision to enable children with disabilities and additional needs to remain with their families.

162. Conclusions

163. Members believe that short break provision is necessary for families and foster carers but note that this will be fully addressed as part of the Aiming High review. The Group feels that the Langley Unit is no longer fit for purpose due to its large and institutionalised feel and should therefore be replaced as soon as possible.

164. **Recommended:**

That short break provision should cease to be provided at the Langley House Unit as, although the service is viewed as good, the physical environment is not suitable and not the model of care the Council should be aspiring to provide. Full consideration of short break provision can be achieved through the Aiming High review.

165. Emergency beds

166. Emergency bed provision had been provided at the Mottram House Unit, Priors Hill. This comprised 2 emergency beds and, until mid 2009, was available to both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils to place children in an emergency. The emergency bed was intended to be for a one night stay only and was not available until 5.00pm with any child or young person placed there needing to be removed by 9.00 am.

167. However, the bed had not been used as intended. J Thorburn in her review noted that since March 2007 there were 64 occasions when children were placed in the emergency bed. On some occasions children were placed more than once. Of these children, 30 were female and 34 were male. The children ranged in age from 9 – 17 with the majority being children in their mid teens:

168. Age at point of admission	169. Number of children
170. 13	171. 14
172. 14	173. 15
174. 15	175. 18

176. Many of the children stayed for very short periods of time and this meant that information about where they went following their stay at Mottram House was not always available. From information that was available, 28% returned home and 22% went to foster care. There was no information on 10 young people which Jill Thorburn

suggested meant that they returned home because if they had remained in care there would be information available about them.

177. If this was the case then 44% of young people who used the emergency bed were able to be placed back home without the risk of them being subject to significant harm. This suggests they did not need to be admitted into the care system in the first place and skilled intervention would have been more appropriate. Since 2009 the emergency bed had ceased to be available. No child or young person had been put at any risk through the withdrawal of the emergency bed. The withdrawal of the emergency bed has resulted in a reduction in demand for such a facility. Current emergency provision is provided by foster carers or other night stock.
178. The previous existence of emergency beds could be seen as an easy short term solution which risked such beds becoming a “dumping ground” with no proper plan in place once a child was placed there. They offered an immediate solution without any apparent follow up through a planned care approach. The emergency bed could also be seen as “feeding” the care system by bringing into care young people who did not need to be in the system in the first place through a lack of alternative provision. As a high proportion of children who had accessed the emergency bed in the past were young people, a more appropriate system could involve outreach workers based in a building where a short break service could be offered. This would also make it more likely that a young person would return to their home rather than remain in the care system.
179. Conclusions
180. Emergency beds should no longer be provided as they simply feed the care system and do not result in proper care planning. For some young people early intervention work can take place without the need for them to enter the care system. The withdrawal of the emergency bed, along with the provision of an assessment bed, enables a child or young person who does need to enter the care system to have a full assessment of their needs which will result in an appropriate care plan being agreed.
181. **Recommended:**  
  
That emergency beds should no longer be available but any emergency provision that is required should be provided through outreach workers or emergency foster carers.
182. Conclusions

183. The provision of residential care has already changed and improved over the life of Cheshire East Council. The change from large impersonal institutions to small ordinary houses in established communities is welcomed. The Council should aspire to all children being cared for in a family environment and as such must ensure that adequate good quality foster provision is available. For some children, though, this is not appropriate and for those children and young people excellent residential provision must be available in homely environments with professionally trained and caring staff. This should be provided in-house and through partnership with existing partners.

184. In view of all the changes in the residential care service, the Group feels it is now important that as much stability as possible is maintained so as to give the changes a chance to bed in. The Group is confident that Cheshire East Council can provide a good standard of residential provision and looks forward to seeing this provision develop in the future.

185. 05/08/10



Appendix 1

Meetings and Visits

- 9 November – meeting of the Task/Finish Group
- During November – visit to two new homes in the Crewe area
- 18 December – meeting of the Task/Finish Group and visit to Priors Hill, Macclesfield
- 21 January – meeting of the Task/Finish Group
- 26 March – visit to Wilkinson House
- 15 April – meeting of the Task/Finish Group and meeting with Children in Care Council
- 28 May – visit to short break provision
- 5 July – meeting of the Task/Finish Group

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Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC033634
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 July 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Sharon Lloyd
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	30 March 2009
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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The home is a purpose built residential centre for children. This home is a large, detached, two storey building situated on a housing estate on the outskirts of town. Transport, education, health, leisure and employment facilities are available within the location of the home.

There are three separate living units on the premises. One unit is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight children and young people, aged from eight years old up to 17 years old, who have a learning or physical disability. This is situated on the ground floor at the rear of the building. There are two large lounges, one of which has a dining area. There is a separate kitchen and a playroom with access to a secure play area. Toilets and bathing facilities are sufficient in number to accommodate both sexes and to meet their individual needs. The home currently provides care and accommodation for one resident young person and approximately 20 children and young people who come to the centre for short breaks.

Two further units provide care and accommodation for children and young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties, including those who present volatile and challenging behaviour. One unit is based on the first floor and caters for up to six young people from eight years old up to 17 years old. The accommodation includes a lounge, kitchen, separate toilet and shower facilities and individual bedrooms as well as a staff office and sleep-in room. Another unit caters for four children and young people from the ages of eight years old up to 17 years old. Two of these may be emergency or short term placements lasting a maximum of 12 weeks. There are additional facilities for young people who are preparing for independent living to practice self care skills and to live semi-independently. These include two lounges and small kitchens on the ground floor. Two further units are no longer operating and are not included in the home's registration. However, at the time of this inspection, a young person was living independently, with limited support in one of these units.

### Summary

A review of the local authority children's homes is being conducted during July and August 2009 and is due to report in September 2009. It is anticipated that by then the local authority will be in a position to decide how to best meet the needs of the young people who currently live at or have short stays at this home.

Eight young people currently live in the home. Approximately 20 more have regular short stays. Five young people contributed to the inspection, which took place unannounced over two days. The home was assessed against all key national minimum standards.

The standard of care throughout the home is variable. There are some good and satisfactory practices that promote young people's welfare but these are not consistently applied and there are shortfalls in meeting the national minimum standards and Children's Homes Regulations.

There have been some improvements since the last inspection but the home continues to provide an inadequate standard of care because shortfalls in practice means that the health, welfare and safety of children and young people are compromised. Some young people receive a very good level of support in preparing for independent living, but this is not consistent and some young people receive an inadequate level of support in this area. Placement planning for

young people moving into the home is inadequate so that young people's needs are not fully addressed in the early stages of their placement.

Support with enjoying and achieving is satisfactory with some very good features. Children and young people are provided with opportunities to make a positive contribution to their own lives and to the community. They report that they feel safe in the home and have good relationships with the staff team. Children and young people like living at the home and are anxious about the future.

The premises do not provide homely accommodation. Monitoring of the operation of the home and of children and young people's welfare is not good enough to ensure the delivery of the best possible care. A temporary manager is in post but is not yet registered with Ofsted. Whilst he is child focused and competent in many areas, he is not sufficiently trained and supported as a new manager, to ensure the home is organised in a way that provides high quality care and meets the diverse and complex needs of all the children and young people.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Nine actions were raised following the last inspection. Improvements have been made to the decoration of the home and much of the graffiti has been removed. However, the home does not provide domestic style accommodation and some parts are in need of renovation. The local authority appreciates that the home is no longer fit for purpose and has begun a review of the service with the intention of providing an improved and more homely environment for children and young people to live in. The action to ensure the home is fit for purpose is repeated.

Although staff have been trained in the administration of medication, minor shortfalls in recording remain. The quality of health plans is variable. This means that some young people do not have comprehensive, up to date health plans that address all their health needs. This action is repeated.

Staff know that they cannot use restraint to prevent young people from leaving the premises. However, the restraint records show that restraint has been used to enforce compliance and a further action regarding the use of restraint is made. The recording of complaints is improved but shortfalls remain and the home cannot demonstrate that the complaints procedure is sufficiently robust to protect children and young people. This action is repeated.

All health and safety checks on the premises have been carried out. However, recruitment procedures and fire safety procedures are not sufficiently robust to ensure children and young people are adequately safeguarded.

A temporary manager is in post and has submitted a Registered Manager application to Ofsted.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is inadequate.

There are good medication procedures and good health plans for some children and young people. However, shortfalls in medicine administration records and procedures means that the home cannot show that all children and young people are receiving the medication they need

as and when they need it. Some health plans do not contain information about children and young people's health history, including their vaccination history, so the home cannot ensure that their health needs are being fully met.

Young people preparing for independent living prepare their own meals without supervision. They have not attended training in food hygiene, so the home is not ensuring that young people know how to prepare and store food safely.

The provision of nutritious and well balanced meals is inconsistent across the home. Some children and young people receive a good standard of well prepared and varied meals, including meals from other cultures. Others receive a variable standard of meals. Some staff sit with children and young people so that mealtimes are enjoyable, social occasions. However, on one unit, there are insufficient dining chairs for children, young people and staff to sit together for meals and mealtimes are irregular. This means that some children and young people do not enjoy mealtimes that are social, well-managed occasions and do not receive a sufficiently nutritious diet.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is inadequate.

Staff follow good procedures for the safekeeping of confidential information. They respect the privacy and dignity of children and young people and follow good procedures in delivering personal care where necessary.

Allegations and disclosures of abuse are dealt with promptly, although they are not always resolved within 28 days. The home works effectively with the local authority safeguarding unit and the police to promote the welfare of children and young people. Parents, children and young people know how to make a complaint and most are confident that the home will address any issues raised. A complaints file is maintained within the home showing details of steps taken to address complaints, although planning and decision making is not always clearly evident. One complaint made has been misfiled and has not been addressed. A log of complaints is not kept. This impedes effective monitoring and puts children and young people at risk of poor quality care.

The home has an anti-bullying policy, known to staff. Children and young people report that incidents of bullying sometimes occur and they are not confident that staff can protect them appropriately. Despite this, children and young people report that they feel safe in the home and can approach staff with any matters of concern. The home has begun to use a restorative justice approach to incidents between young people with some limited success to date. This is because not all young people affected by an incident have been involved in the restorative justice conference. This means they are therefore not engaged in the process and are not convinced that matters have been dealt with fairly.

Although good procedures are in place to promote the safety and well-being of children and young people, these are not consistently applied and this compromises the home's ability to safeguard children and young people. For example, whilst effective measures are in place to promote the welfare of those who are missing from home, significant events are not always notified to the relevant authorities. This means that external monitoring of the home's response to incidents does not routinely take place. For example, Ofsted has not always been notified



when the police have been called to the home. This impedes Ofsted from effectively exercising its regulatory auditing and safeguarding function.

The employment of effective behaviour management strategies is sometimes good but is not consistently applied. Individual incentive schemes are implemented but not always closely followed, so that young people's progress is not always accurately measured and incentives promised are not always delivered. Staff have received extensive training in methods of control, including the use of restraint. However, monitoring of restraints is not sufficiently effective to ensure children and young people are being restrained appropriately. Following concerns about some of the methods of restraint, a 'no restraints' policy has been recently introduced to the home, to prevent the possibility of children and young people being injured during a restraint. All staff have received training in attachment and emotional development in preparation for forthcoming closer working with the multi-professional team in developing individualised behaviour management strategies.

Routine health and safety checks are carried out on the home to ensure that children and young people live in a safe environment. Fire drills are carried out regularly, but young people and staff who are new to the home do not routinely experience a fire drill within the first month of arrival. This means that some young people and staff may not have had the opportunity to practice the evacuation procedure in the event of a fire.

Although risk assessments are carried out on the premises and on children and young people's known and potential risk taking activities, these are not always sufficiently robust. For example, risk assessments relating to the placement of one young person in an independence training flat on the premises does not provide staff or the young person with sufficient guidance to ensure their safety. Where risk assessments do give good guidance to staff, these are not always followed. This places young people at unnecessary and avoidable risk.

A new door lock is in place to enable wheelchair users to exit the premises unaided. This involves a pushbutton mechanism and is a potential hazard to children and young people using the respite service. Good supervision ensures that no children or young people leave the premises without staff. However, individual risk assessments that are shared with social workers and parents do not address this potential danger.

Staff files are maintained in line with Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001, with minor omissions. For example, photographic identity is not always held. This means that staff recruitment checks are not consistently implemented to a high standard and the home cannot demonstrate that all staff employed at the home are fully vetted as suitable individuals to work with children and young people. Where disciplinary investigations have taken place, staff files do not hold sufficient information to show the initial reason for disciplinary action, investigation methods and the outcome. This means the home cannot demonstrate that it safeguards children and young people through good disciplinary procedures and effective monitoring of staff member's practice on their return to work.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

The level of support provided to children and young people is varied and inconsistent. Some young people receive good support in line with their identified needs and wishes. They participate in group meetings and have the opportunity to meet with their key workers, but

this is not as often as they would like. A visitor from the National Youth Advocacy Service attends the home each month and assists children and young people to make their views known.

The home works with other professionals, such as the looked after children's nurse and the child and adolescent mental health service, to provide additional support to children who need it. The home recognises that more is needed to address the specific needs of individual children and young people. It is engaging with the multi-professional team to obtain advice and guidance, so that staff can improve the level of care and support they provide. Young people are supported to take controlled risks. However, the level of support provided is not always sufficient to ensure young people's welfare and safety is promoted.

The support children and young people receive with education is variable. Those young people who value education receive a high level of support including additional tuition. Other young people do not attend school and the arrangements put in place to ensure they continue to receive education are inadequate. The home works with schools, Connexions and the looked after children's education support services to assist young people in finding suitable college courses. Computers are available for young people, however, one has been out of use for seven weeks. This means that some young people are disadvantaged because they are unable to use a computer for homework, revision and communicating with friends and family.

Children and young people have the opportunity to engage in organised activities and outings with staff. Staff members share their interests with young people and encourage them to develop their talents and interests. For example, young people receive encouragement to participate in and enjoy music and are enabled to attend their school prom. Free passes are provided to the local leisure centre, but are used infrequently. Children who use the short break service have access to a wide range of play equipment and the enclosed, safe garden has been further developed to enable them to participate in gardening. The home does not provide children and young people with an annual holiday, even though this is their permanent home. This leaves young people feeling they are treated unfairly and are missing out because they live in a children's home.

Arrangements are in place to support young people to meet up with and visit friends and family. Children and young people enjoy spending their leisure time mixing with peers locally, however, these relationships can sometimes lead to inappropriate and dangerous behaviours.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Each young person has a placement plan that sets out their individual needs. The quality of these plans is varied. Placement planning does not always fully address the needs of each young person. Staff are sometimes unclear about their roles and do not provide sufficient levels of support to some young people. This does not adequately safeguard or promote young people's welfare. The home contributes to statutory reviews of care plans and produces a report on the young person's progress and development.

The home promotes contact with families and friends in accordance with each young person's individual needs and agreed plans. The staff team recognise the importance of families and their role in decision making for children and young people.

Children and young people are encouraged to attend and to contribute to planning and review meetings about themselves and some do so willingly and make effective contributions. Young person's meetings are held on some units although not regularly. Feedback to young people on queries raised within the meetings is not given formally, so young people are not aware of how issues raised are being addressed. This makes them feel that they are not being listened to.

A young person ably represents young people living in children's homes and those with disabilities on the local authority children in care council. Children and young people have the opportunity to participate in community events. For example, many children and young people enjoyed attending an event to celebrate the launch of the new council and several young people are preparing to participate in a forthcoming event by providing musical entertainment.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is inadequate.

The size and design of the home does not promote domestic style living for young people. The home consists of separate units on the same site with individual front doors and adjoining doors to the main building, which are kept locked. Security of the premises is an issue, young people from the local community have entered the premises without the knowledge of staff and this compromises the safety of children, young people and staff.

Since the last inspection, the home has been decorated throughout and young people have been consulted about the decoration of their own rooms, so that individual bedrooms are personalised and well furnished. Children and young people on the short break unit enjoy comfortable and pleasant accommodation. Improvements made provide a more comfortable home, but the layout of the home remains institutionalised. Dirty windows and external graffiti continues to detract from a homely environment.

The home is kept reasonably clean, but the fabric of the home is out of date and deteriorating. For example, the water tank that services the home is old and rusted; patio doors are in need of repair; toilets for the use of children and young people are in rooms without wash hand basins and this does not encourage good hygiene habits. The local authority is reluctant to provide funding for renovations because it recognises the shortfalls of the premises and plans to move the home to more suitable accommodation within the next 12 months. In the meantime, children and young people are living in below standard accommodation.

The lounge and kitchen doors are usually propped open during the day. They are fitted with locks so that these rooms can be made inaccessible to children and young people during education hours and after bedtime. Young people's bedrooms are kept locked and as children and young people do not have keys to their rooms, they need to ask staff to unlock their doors whenever they wish to enter their own rooms. This practice serves to safeguard property and privacy, however it does not promote domestic style living and does not encourage children and young people to feel 'at home'. Routine risk assessments have not been carried out on individual children and young people to determine whether some individuals can safely look after their own keys.

The home provides varying degrees of support to young people who are preparing for independent living. Whilst there is evidence of some very good work in assisting young people with disabilities to learn independent living skills, this is hindered by a lack of appropriate

facilities, such as a low level kitchen. Other young people are practising independent living skills in flats on the premises, some have not been adequately prepared for this. The home recognises these shortfalls and is taking action to address them.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

The home has been without a Registered Manager since September 2008. A temporary manager was appointed in December 2008 and submitted a Registered Manager application to Ofsted in June 2009. This demonstrates that the local authority has not met the requirement to appoint a person to manage the home within a reasonable timescale.

There are shortfalls in the monitoring of the operation of the home and visits to the home on behalf of the local authority are sporadic, so that the welfare of the children and young people who live there is not being effectively monitored.

Although the home operates as a single home with one manager, there is a separate statement of purpose for each unit. Whilst most of the information listed in Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations is included, some pertinent information is missing or incorrect. This means that the statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the care provided at the home.

The home has established an additional unit, catering for young people preparing for independence. This is in breach of its conditions of registration and no variation application has been submitted to Ofsted. This means that the home is providing care and accommodation to young people that it is not registered to provide because Ofsted has not considered whether the home has the facilities and capability to provide this service. The home ceased using this unit immediately after the inspection.

The manager and most of the staff team are appropriately qualified and experienced in the care of children and young people. New staff are enrolled upon a suitable training programme within appropriate timescales, so that they learn good practice in working with children and young people. All staff have a supervision contract but the level of one-to-one supervision provided is not always in accordance with the guidance in the national minimum standards. This means that staff do not always receive the level of support they need to effectively look after the children and young people.

Children and young people like and trust the staff team and value their help and support. There is inconsistency across the home in the way that staff vacancies are covered. For example, in some units, shortfalls in the rota are addressed by employing regular agency staff to act as full time staff members on a temporary basis. This provides children and young people with good continuity of care. The staff team that looks after children and young people with disabilities is heavily supplemented with part time relief workers. This means that there can sometimes be 16 to 20 different staff members working in any one week. This does not provide good continuity of care for the permanent resident and means that those children having short stays are looked after by a selection of different staff, so that it is hard for them to form relationships with staff. The home has gone some way to addressing continuity of care for the permanent resident by allocating two members of staff to take responsibility for assisting the young person on outings and appointments.

The quality of the information held about individual children and young people is varied. Some files are well kept and comprehensive, whereas others do not contain all the information required. Young people confirmed they can see their files with the exception of third party confidential information. They know what is being written about them and are enabled to contribute to their records.

The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate. There is inconsistency across the service in the level of care delivered. There is some good work with particular young people whose diverse needs are met. However, young people's rights are not always respected or promoted and their needs are not always recognised and addressed. The home is not adequately monitored to ensure that children and young people are treated equally and that diversity is valued and respected.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Statutory requirements**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Due date</b>
16	ensure records relating to complaints are appropriately maintained (Regulation 24(5))	31 July 2009
12	ensure that there is an up to date and comprehensive health plan for each young person accommodated at the home (Regulation 20)	31 July 2009
13	ensure that each child and young person has access to such medical treatment as they may require (Regulation 20)	31 July 2009
20	ensure that where any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 takes place, the Registered Person notifies the persons listed in column 2 without delay (Regulation 30)	31 July 2009
22	ensure that no measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable is used and regularly monitor the records of restraints and additional measures of control (Regulation 17)	31 July 2009
26	ensure that unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children and young people accommodated in the home are identified and so far as possible, eliminated (Regulation 23)	31 July 2009
26	ensure that the premises are fit for the purpose of a children's home, and that they are suitable for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives set out in the home's statement of purpose (Reg 31 (1))	12 September 2009

23	provide for the number and needs of the children accommodated so far as is reasonably practicable, adequate facilities for children to prepare their own food if they wish and are of an age to do so (Regulation 31 (5))	12 September 2009
27	ensure that staff records demonstrate that suitability checks have been carried in accordance with Schedule 2 (Regulation 26)	31 August 2009
1	revise the statement of purpose so that it accurately describes the operation and conduct of the home and ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose (Regulation 4 and 5)	31 August 2009
32	ensure that the welfare of the children and young people is regularly monitored (Regulation 33)	31 July 2009
33	ensure that the operation of the home is effectively monitored (Regulation 34).	31 July 2009

## Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that physical restrictions on normal movements within the home are used only in relation to a child where the restriction has been agreed within their placement plan (and care plan if appropriate) and are used only where necessary to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (NMS 23)
- ensure that dining rooms and their furnishings are suitable for the number and needs of children and staff dining in them (NMS 10)
- ensure that meals are set up to be well-managed, orderly, social occasions and provide children with food that is properly prepared, wholesome and nutritious, having regard to their cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds and dietary needs and choices (NMS 10)
- ensure that children and young people involved in preparing food for others have received appropriate training or are appropriately supervised in safe food handling and hygiene (NMS 10)
- carry out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest and take action where feasible to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying (NMS 18)
- ensure that all children, young people and staff know the emergency evacuation procedures, including those for use at night (NMS 26)
- ensure that staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour and that measures of control are designed to help the child and are fair and consistently applied (NMS 22)
- ensure that all children are given individual support in line with their needs and wishes and children identified as having particular needs receive help, guidance and support when needed or requested (NMS 7)

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- ensure that young people have access to a computer to assist them with studying (NMS 14)
  - provide an educational programme during normal school hours for children and young people who are not in school (NMS 14)
  - ensure that medicine administration records indicate when medication ceases and when and how it is disposed of (NMS 13)
  - ensure that all staff receive one-to-one supervision in line with the guidance in the National Minimum Standards (NMS 28)
  - provide the manager with such training as is necessary for managing the children's home (NMS 31)
  - ensure that each child's file contains all the necessary information as detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations (NMS 35).

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Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC059875
<b>Inspection date</b>	6 November 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Michelle Moss
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Random

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	8 June 2009
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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

The home provides specialised care for up to six children, aged eight years old up to 12 years old on admission. The registration of the home allows children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning and physical disabilities to be cared for. However, the focus of attention is on providing care and support for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The house is a detached property set in its own grounds. It is spacious and well equipped. There is a large family kitchen-diner, lounge, play room and separate computer room. Each of the children have a single bedroom and have access to an adequate number of bath and shower rooms. The location of the home provides good access to a range of community resources. The home has two family cars to facilitate community involvement.

At the time of the visit, four children were resident at the home of which one child was met.

### **Summary**

This was interim inspection that has looked at the progress the home has made in regards to two recommendations raised at the last full inspection. Also, staying safe has been re-inspected to reassess outcomes for children. The home has addressed the previously identified shortfalls and in doing so, enhanced the health and welfare of children. However, there is one new shortfall in recording that requires further improvement. This relates to discipline and restraint records needing to be more transparent to show children's rights are not compromised.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Improvements in the recording of training undertaken by staff is helping to validate their range of skills and qualifications in their care of children. This includes receiving training in safeguarding, first aid and care and control. Another area of improvement, has been the introduction of checks completed on hot water temperatures. This additional safety check is helping safeguard children, by reducing the risks associated with hot water including potential scalding.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is not judged.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children live in a home that provides them with good standards of physical safety and security. This extends to having a comprehensive health and safety auditing system, whereby aspects of fire, electrical and water safety are frequently checked. Areas of privacy are respected including staff being familiar with the safeguards required in confidential management of children's personal data. A strong emphasis is placed on children's welfare. This includes having strong links with clinical practitioners and having established procedures that are understood by staff.

The staff continue to receive behaviour management training that focuses on a therapeutic support model of care. Conflict resolution is applied to help achieve realistic outcomes for children. This includes working in partnership with specialist services to gain greater insight into understanding the behavioural traits displayed by children and how to avoid them escalating. Some of the necessary preventative measures involve the use of physical intervention and sanctions, of which records are made. However, the depth of recording is sometimes misleading. For example, when a restraint has been used, it is not always clear over the immediate risk of harm to the child or others to justify its use. Also, recordings are not always capturing the feelings and views of children, to enable them to have their views formally acknowledged and their rights enhanced.

Children continue to be protected through the home's monitoring of visitors and the careful selection and vetting of all staff. Also, children have access to an effective complaint's procedure that they can use to raise concerns or worries with the knowledge they will be addressed.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is not judged.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is not judged.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is not judged.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Statutory requirements**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### **Recommendations**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- make sure all children are given an opportunity to express their feelings and views within a reasonable time frame following a sanction or restraint. These feelings should be recorded wherever possible in the records kept by the home (NMS 22.14)
- make sure the records made for both sanctions and restraints are sufficiently detailed to validate the measure used. This should include what the immediate risks were to justify the control measure used.(NMS 22.6,7,9)

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Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC033634
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 March 2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Sharon Lloyd
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	1 July 2009
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This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The home is a purpose built residential centre for children. This home is a large, detached, two storey building situated in large grounds on a housing estate on the outskirts of town. Transport, education, health, leisure and employment facilities are available within the local area.

There are three separate living units on the premises. One unit is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight children and young people, aged from eight years old up to 17 years old, who have a learning or physical disability. This is situated on the ground floor at the rear of the building. There are two large lounges, one of which has a dining area. One lounge opens onto a large playing field with swings and a slide. There is a separate kitchen and a playroom with access to a secure play area suitable for small bikes and scooters. Toilets and bathing facilities are sufficient in number to accommodate both sexes and to meet their individual needs. The home currently provides care and accommodation for one resident young person and approximately 20 children and young people who come to the centre for short breaks.

Two further units have, until December 2009, provided care and accommodation for children and young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties, including those who present volatile and challenging behaviour. Both of these units have closed down since the last inspection and the staff team has been redeployed with some staff joining the remaining unit. Children and young people have moved to alternative placements in accordance with their individual care plans. A large part of the premises is therefore now empty.

### Summary

The inspection took place unannounced over two days. The home was assessed against the key national minimum standards and actions and recommendations raised following the last inspection were followed up. One young person and the staff on duty participated in the inspection. Two other young people were present during the inspection and observations were made of their care.

The home has made significant progress in meeting the regulatory requirements and national minimum standards. However, some breaches of regulations relating to the outcome area 'staying safe' remain. This means that the home does not safeguard children and young people effectively.

The home meets children's health needs well. There is one recommendation relating to recording of medicine administration. Children's education and leisure needs are promoted and they are well supported.

Carers encourage children and young people to make their views known and to participate in decisions about their care wherever possible. One young person participates in the Children in Care Council and contributes through this to the development of children's services. Shortfalls in the accommodation include institutionalised bathrooms for children and young people and no bath or shower rooms for staff.

Monitoring of the operation of the home and the services to children and young people has improved substantially. The staff team is well qualified but has not had sufficient training opportunities to develop the skills needed to deliver a consistently high quality service.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The home was judged inadequate at the last inspection and a notice to improve required twelve actions to be addressed where the home was in breach of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. In addition, there were 14 failures to meet the national minimum standards.

The local authority has made extensive improvements to the service it provides to children in care and as a result a number of young people have been discharged to more suitable placements. Alderley and Mottram units have closed down so that only Langley unit remains operational. This provides respite care to children and young people with disabilities and accommodation to one young person.

Many of the previous actions and recommendations related to the quality of care provided to children living in Alderley and Mottram units. However, all have been followed up to ensure that the home is providing suitable care to all the children who use it.

Three actions relating to the outcome area 'being healthy' have been addressed. Comprehensive and detailed health plans guide staff in how to meet children's individual health needs. Children receive the medication they need and staff are proactive in recognising when children and young people with communication difficulties may be in pain and ensuring they receive the treatment they need. Young people who prepare their own food are provided with adapted facilities to enable them to do so safely.

Four recommendations for good practice were made under this outcome area but three are no longer applicable. One recommendation remains outstanding: the home was required to ensure that medicine administration records indicate when medication ceases and when and how it is disposed of. This information is not consistently recorded in medicine administration records and the recommendation has been repeated.

Five actions were raised under the outcome area 'staying safe'. All records relating to Alderley and Mottram units have been archived and were not available for inspection. Records of measures of control demonstrate that no restraints have been used on Langley unit since before the last inspection and sanctions are not used at all. Risk assessments are in place to safeguard children and young people from avoidable hazards.

Three actions have not been fully implemented. The log of complaints remains poorly kept so the home cannot demonstrate that all complaints are recorded and addressed within reasonable timescales. Similarly, the home cannot demonstrate that all allegations against staff have been appropriately dealt with and that referral to the safeguarding team has been considered or actioned. This impedes effective monitoring and puts children and young people at risk of poor quality care.

Notifiable events have not always been notified to the relevant authorities and in particular to Ofsted. This means that external monitoring of the home's response to incidents does not

routinely take place. For example, Ofsted has not always been notified when serious allegations have been made against staff. This impedes Ofsted from effectively exercising its regulatory auditing and safeguarding function.

The last inspection found that staff files were maintained in line with Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001, with minor omissions. For example, photographic identity was not always held. This remains the case. This means that the home cannot demonstrate that all staff employed at the home are fully vetted as suitable individuals to work with children and young people.

Four recommendations for good practice were made under the outcome area 'staying safe' and all have been met. A new draft anti-bullying policy is available to guide staff in how to deal with episodes of bullying. However, bullying is no longer a feature of the home. Monthly fire drills take place at various times of the day so that everyone is familiar with fire evacuation procedures and the home could be safely and quickly vacated in the event of a fire. Effective, positive behaviour management techniques are employed so that children and young people learn what is expected of them at the home. There are no physical restrictions on normal movements within the home except to safeguard children's welfare. For example, a gate prevents children from entering the kitchen while the cook is preparing food but enables children to see in.

Three recommendations were made under the outcome area 'enjoying and achieving', two of which related to shortfalls in the care provided in the two units that have closed down. All are met. Children and young people receive individual support in line with their needs and wishes. They all attend school and have access to computers for education and leisure pursuits.

One action was raised under 'economic wellbeing'. The home was required to ensure that the home is fit for purpose. This has, for the most part, been addressed by the closure of the two other units. The remaining unit is well appointed and provides comfortable accommodation. There are some shortfalls in the accommodation that the home is aware of and addressing.

Three actions raised relate to organisation and management. The systems for monitoring the home have been substantially improved so that any shortfalls in the operation of the home and the quality of care can be identified and addressed. The Statement of Purpose has been updated so that it accurately describes the services provided by the home and provides valuable information for parents and social workers.

Three recommendations were made in relation to the organisation of the home and one has been met. The manager of the home has received additional support and training to develop the skills to manage the home. However, he plans to move on shortly and a new manager has been identified. A recommendation to provide staff with one to one supervision once a month is almost met so that staff are better guided and supported in their work. Children's files are well kept and contain all relevant information.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

The home employs two part time cooks who provide a range of nutritious and varied meals including foods from other cultures. Children's individual dietary needs are taken into account and records are kept of what they actually eat. Good food hygiene standards are maintained.

Young people who prepare their own meals do so under staff supervision and learn about food safety and hygiene in the kitchen.

Children's health needs are promoted through well documented and detailed health plans that guide staff in how to meet the individual health needs of each child. Carers communicate well with parents and keep up to date in changes in children's health status and medication requirements. Good routines ensure that careful attention is paid to health needs.

Medicines are safely stored and carefully administered. Records show that children receive the medicines they need; however they do not always show when a medicine has been returned to the parent so that it is not completely clear that each child has had all required doses during their stay without cross-checking the record with other records.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is inadequate.

Carers respect children and young people's privacy and provide them with opportunities to have time alone in their bedrooms should they want it. Bedroom doors are fitted with alarms so that night staff are alert to children who need assistance during the night. Parents and social workers are aware of this. Only one child or young person uses the bathroom at any one time. This child is supported by carers in accordance with individual needs for assistance with personal hygiene. There are no screens around baths and specialist showers so the home does not adequately respect children and young people's modesty. The home has identified this as an area for improvement.

Parents and some young people know how to make a complaint. Long-standing plans to introduce more user-friendly complaints forms for children with communication difficulties have not yet been fulfilled. However, carers do consider each month whether children and young people have been upset during their short stay and try to elicit this information from them and act on it.

There is no log of complaints so the home cannot demonstrate that it takes all complaints seriously and addresses them within a reasonable timescale. Records of some complaints and allegations are held in a file for that purpose but these records are not consistently well kept and in some cases it is not clear what action has been taken to investigate the complaint. Outcomes are not routinely recorded. This means the home cannot demonstrate that it acts to address complaints and improve practice.

Allegations against staff members are investigated but the records kept do not always demonstrate good safeguarding procedures and some records have missing information. A number of carers have not had refresher training in safeguarding children and are not sufficiently knowledgeable about safeguarding practices. The home has identified this as an area for development.

Notifications of serious incidents are not routinely forwarded to the relevant authorities. For example, Ofsted has not been informed of some serious allegations against staff. This means that external monitoring of the home's response to incidents does not routinely take place. This impedes Ofsted from effectively exercising its regulatory auditing and safeguarding function.

The anti-bullying policy has been updated and shared with carers. Bullying is not a feature of the home and no children are considered to be at risk of bullying in the home. No children or young people have been missing from home. External doors to the home are kept locked and can only be opened with a fob. The accommodated young person has a fob and can enter and leave the premises at will. However, children and young people on short stays cannot leave the premises unless a member of staff unlocks the front door. This action is taken to safeguard the vulnerable children who use the service. However, the home cannot evidence that it is discussed with parents and carers and agreed in placement plans as a necessary precaution.

Records relating to the behaviour management of children and young people on the two units that closed down in December 2009 have been archived and were not available for inspection. There have been no restraints used in the remaining unit since before the last inspection. Sanctions are never used and restraint is rare. Effective behaviour management strategies are used by the staff team to support children and young people to learn socially acceptable behaviour patterns as far as possible.

Good health and safety routines are followed and routine checks on appliances and services ensure that the premises are maintained in a reasonable condition. Fire drills are practiced once a month so that everyone at the home knows how to evacuate the premises quickly in the event of a fire. There are no staff bath or shower rooms for the use of staff who sleep in overnight. As staff do not use children's bathrooms, they are at risk of body odour through no fault of their own.

Although new recruitment procedures have been introduced to ensure robust checks are carried out on prospective staff members, employment records of those already in post do not demonstrate vigorous vetting procedures. This means that some staff members in post may have been employed without full and intensive checks and this does not adequately safeguard children and young people from coming into contact with potential abusers.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

The home provides children and young people with a good level of support to meet their individual needs. Carers work closely with schools so that they use the same communication strategies with individual children who don't use speech. All carers are trained in the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System and use this effectively to communicate with those children who use it.

Children and young people have the opportunity to meet with key workers on a regular basis and to express their views about the care they are receiving. Carers are familiar with the non-verbal behaviours and cues of children with communication difficulties and recognise the importance of paying careful attention to these so that they can respond as well as possible to children's needs, wishes and feelings.

Communication with schools is good and a young person who is accommodated at the home has received extra tuition in preparation for GCSE examinations. The young person reports that carers provide a good level of support to all children. Computers are available to children and young people for use in homework and leisure. Some use email to communicate with friends and social workers.

The home has a variety of toys and play materials to meet the needs of a range of children. Children enjoy listening to and playing music, arts and craft and using the sensory toys and soft play room. Outdoor play equipment is available for the more mobile children. Outings include trips to the park and to a youth club for children with special needs. The home has a new 16-seater adapted vehicle but few carers are licensed to drive it and this limits the number of outings children have. The home also has a car so that individual children and young people can go out without the stigma of arriving in a minibus. Parents report that children enjoy their short stays. The young person who is accommodated reports that staff encourage outings and activities with friends and these can be arranged as long as they are well planned in advance.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Placement planning is good and the home is flexible in meeting the individual needs of children and families. For example, it provides day care to children where this is more suitable than overnight stays. Placement plans provide carers with good guidance in how to meet the individual needs of each child. However, they do not demonstrate that parents and social workers have been made aware of the home's policy on keeping external doors locked. Those children and young people who can, participate in placement reviews and contribute to decisions made about their lives.

The home works with young people, their parents and social workers from both children's services and adults' services to make appropriate plans for young people coming up to transition. Young people are fully involved in this planning.

Since the closure of a large section of the home in December 2009, there have been problems with the home's telephone system that has resulted in difficulty for families in contacting the home and their children out of office hours. The home is aware of this but has not been successful in attempts to fix it. Accommodated young people have ready access to a phone and are encouraged to use it to maintain contact with family and friends.

Young people develop self-esteem and confidence through participation in local activities and groups. For example, one young person is an active member of the Children in Care Council and contributes to policy development and planning. He has acted as a consultant on the development of a new children's home where able bodied children will be accommodated alongside wheelchair users.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

Carers support children and young people to develop self care skills and to be as independent as possible. Young people approaching adulthood learn to budget, shop for and prepare their own meals, in accordance with their level of ability and understanding. They learn to manage money and use bank accounts. They are encouraged to make their own appointments and to mix with peers socially. There is a lack of clarity about the funding available for clothing for young people who are accommodated so the home cannot demonstrate that young people receive sufficient funding for clothes.

The home provides comfortable, well-appointed accommodation with easy access for wheelchair users. Each bedroom is individually styled and decorated so that children and young people

have some choice of room and wherever possible stay in a room they like. Carers are currently updating bedrooms to make them more comfortable and attractive for children and young people. Some specialist beds are available and carers use hoists to help non-mobile children and young people get into bed easily.

Bathrooms are large and institutional in style. The home is aware of this and plans are in place to make them more aesthetically pleasing.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The new Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and updated so that it accurately reflects the services provided at the home and is available to parents and social workers. The home is led by a registered manager who is a qualified social worker. He is assisted by two senior residential workers, both of whom are qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 4. The manager was registered with Ofsted in September 2009 but plans to move on shortly. The local authority has arranged for a suitably experienced and qualified manager to take his place as manager of the home.

Children and young people are supported by a well qualified and experienced staff team who know them well. More than 80% of the team are qualified to NVQ at level 3 and the remaining staff are engaged in this training. All carers have completed induction and foundation training but some need refresher training in a number of areas. Two members of staff have joined the team from the units that have closed down and are supported by the senior staff and colleagues to learn the practices of the home.

Carers participate in team meetings and receive one to one supervision to support them to deliver a good service to children and young people. Supervision is usually given once a month but there have been some gaps where staff have not received the support they need to ensure they consistently deliver good quality care to children and young people. Despite this, the home has successfully continued to provide a good service to children and young people during a time of change and uncertainty within the local authority. The newly established team has identified improvements it wishes to make to the service so that children and young people will have more comfortable and pleasant short stays. This work has already begun.

The home is effectively monitored on behalf of the provider and the operation of the home is routinely monitored by the manager and in most cases action is taken to address shortfalls identified.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The home promotes the wellbeing of all the children and young people who use the service and carers are sensitive to their individual needs and abilities. This means they tailor the routines, activities and leisure pursuits offered to suit each individual during their short stay. However, staffing levels sometimes restrict the young person who is accommodated from participating in events outside the home unless this is planned in advance. Staff are not trained in equality and diversity and this means there are gaps in the knowledge and understanding of some staff members. For example, a complaint was made against a member of staff who had inadvertently used inappropriate, racist terminology when dealing with a visitor.



## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
27	ensure that staff records demonstrate that suitability checks have been carried in accordance with Schedule 2 (Regulation 26)	30 April 2010
17	ensure that written records are kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect and any action taken in response (Regulation 16)	9 April 2010
16	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24)	9 April 2010
20	ensure that where any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 take place, the Registered Person notifies the persons listed in column 2 without delay. (Regulation 30)	9 April 2010

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that medicine administration records indicate when medication ceases and when and how it is disposed of (NMS 13)
- improve the arrangements for phone contact between parents and children out of hours (NMS 4.2)
- ensure the policy relating to clothing allowances is implemented in practice and known to young people and staff (NMS 11.2)
- provide separate bathing or shower facilities for staff (NMS 25.7)
- ensure that all staff receive one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff each month in line with the guidance in the national minimum standards (NMS 28.2)
- ensure that physical restrictions on normal movements within the home are used only in relation to a child where the restriction has been agreed within their placement plan (and care plan if appropriate) and are used only where necessary to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (NMS 23.5)
- ensure that personal assistance with bathing is provided in a way that maximises dignity and to this end install screens around baths and showers (NMS 25.5)
- provide staff with training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the home (NMS 31.1)

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Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC394229
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 April 2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Elizabeth Taylor
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	23 October 2009
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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

The home is a detached property situated in a residential area. The location of the house means young people can easily access community facilities such as public transport, schools, colleges and shops. The home can accommodate a total of four young people from 11 to 17 years of age, of either gender. The home aims to support young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

### **Summary**

This was an unannounced full inspection to assess the home's performance against all of the key national minimum standards.

The home is effectively managed and young people receive a good standard of care. Although staff continue to be appointed to form a full complement, young people have formed positive relationships with members who have worked in the home since it opened in December 2009. The staff are experienced and qualified. They have already developed a child-centred environment and demonstrate a commitment to reflective practice and to implementing improvements to benefit young people. The home has established links with a range of professionals and local agencies to support them in meeting young people's diverse needs.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

No previous actions or recommendations were made as this is the first inspection following registration of the home.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from effective assessment of their health needs and clear plans which ensure these are met in full. Young people are involved in meal planning and shopping and, somewhat reluctantly, in cooking meals. Meals are healthy, nutritious, well balanced and meet individual tastes. Fresh fruit is available and fresh vegetables are incorporated into the daily menu. Young people are encouraged to try different foods such as Italian, Mexican, Chinese and Indian. Mealtimes are social occasions and dining facilities are appropriate. Takeaways are restricted to once a week. Young people are aware of the benefits of healthy eating but say they do not always like options such as 'low fat' items.

Young people's health care needs are assessed in a timely manner on admission. Individual health plans are developed by the nurse for looked after children. These targets are incorporated into young people's individual care plans. Staff ensure appointments are made for young people to receive routine health care checks though some young people do not always choose to attend them. Nevertheless, staff continue to persevere and explain to young people the benefit derived from regular check-ups. Staff particularly promote and nurture the emotional well-being of young people. Specialist services are gained to support their individual needs and staff work closely with a range of health professionals to ensure young people are well informed about matters such as alcohol and drug misuse and sexual health matters. This helps young people

to make more informed decisions and choices. Young people are also encouraged to use a local gym to support a healthy lifestyle. All but one newly appointed staff member has completed emergency first aid training. Young people have also completed first aid training with staff. This means young people know what action to take if they or someone else has an accident or injury and supports their preparation for adulthood.

The home has clear policies and procedures in place for administering medication and staff receive appropriate training. This safeguards young people's welfare. Written consent is gained from appropriate persons for the administration of medication, including homely remedies and emergency treatment. All medication is securely stored within the home. Medication records are well maintained and are appropriately completed.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected. They have their own bedrooms and keys so that they can keep their belongings safe. Staff try to maintain a balance between adequate supervision of young people and promoting their privacy. However, the appointment of several new staff over the last month or so has resulted in a high number of staff being on duty at times. This has proved to be a little unsettling for young people currently resident. The manager is conscious of the impact of this and has arranged for additional staff to work off site at times. Staff uphold confidentiality at all times. Personal information on young people is securely stored and no personal details are displayed anywhere in the home. Young people have a mobile phone provided by the home to receive or make private calls and can use the house phone to call family members and their social worker.

Young people know about the formal complaints process and complaints forms and envelopes are put in their bedroom on arrival and reissued when requested. Young people say they prefer to tell staff about any problems but that they 'do not have any'. The home strives to promote good relationships with neighbours and the wider community and takes action to quickly resolve any matters. Young people's social workers are complimentary about the home's ability to revise its practice to ensure young people's individual needs are met.

Young people are supported to keep themselves safe. Measures such as young people informing staff of their whereabouts and expected time of return in the evening help to promote their safety in the community. Staff receive child protection training and this is updated on a regular basis. This ensures they are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues and know the procedure for reporting child protection concerns or suspicions. The manager has established good links with the local safeguarding board. Young people say they feel safe in the home.

Young people are aware of the home's anti-bullying policy and say there is no bullying in the home. Staff promote diversity and tolerance by constructively challenging negative attitudes and encouraging young people to learn and accept other people's differences. In this way staff help young people to develop clear expectations of how they should treat, and be treated, by other people.

The home has an individual plan for each young person that details action to be taken when they are absent without authority. The plan is developed in conjunction with the local police liaison officer and takes account of young people's age and level of vulnerability. Staff monitor young people's whereabouts and respond quickly to any changes in behaviour.

Staff view young people in a positive light and work hard at building supportive relationships with them. Young people are helped to develop socially acceptable behaviour by the use of incentive schemes, praise and the implementation of firm and consistently applied boundaries. Young people know what standards of behaviour are expected of them as these are clearly specified in individual contracts. The contracts are developed by social workers in conjunction with the young person and care staff. The contracts are regularly reviewed and revised as young people demonstrate their sustained compliance.

The home's own behaviour management plan for young people lacks sufficient detail about how some behaviours are managed and the contents do not cross-reference with other documents such as risk assessments and contracts. Staff are trained in an approved behaviour management approach which promotes de-escalation techniques with physical intervention identified as a measure to be used as a last resort only. The approach is successfully implemented by staff as no restraints have been necessary to date. The range of sanctions imposed on the young people for the first three months of the year were somewhat unimaginative. However, the lack of effectiveness in assisting young people to take responsibility for their actions was recognised by the staff team. More meaningful measures are now imposed such as reparation. Young people say they can talk to staff and that staff 'listen and help'.

The home ensures young people live in a safe environment, free from hazards. Risk assessments for the premises are in place. Fire safety matters receive good attention; tests on fire safety systems are generally recorded weekly and fire fighting equipment is regularly serviced. Young people receive fire safety instruction and are involved in fire drills at appropriate intervals. The fire risk assessment for the premises is up to date. There is clear evidence to show the electrical system is well maintained and all electrical appliances are regularly serviced.

The system for holding information about staff is not yet firmly established. Some required information is kept securely within the home while other information is located in the human resources department. All required information was produced during the inspection and showed that a robust recruitment and selection process is in operation. This ensures all persons working in the home are deemed suitable to work with young people. Visitors to the home are robustly checked by staff who are vigilant. This protects young people.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Young people's individual needs are quickly identified and action is taken to ensure they receive appropriate support from a range of professionals and agencies. Young people are allocated a key worker on admission, although all staff are expected to work directly with young people to ensure their needs are addressed. Records of direct work with young people show the focus of discussion is clearly linked to targets in young people's plans, to help them develop and progress. However, the diversity of matters discussed mean that some areas are not followed through to demonstrate young people's greater understanding or development.

Young people are able to contact their social worker and an independent advocate provides further individual support. Parents and other family members are also encouraged to be actively involved in plans for young people's care. Staff welcome young people's friends to the home which supports their social integration. The collaborative approach with all interested persons means young people's individual needs are effectively promoted.



Staff appreciate the importance of education for the young people. An incentive scheme is used to encourage young people to benefit from education and training opportunities. This is successful in that young people are engaging in some form of education or training, suited to their individual needs. Young people have access to a computer in the home and a selection of reference and reading books to assist studying.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Each young person has a detailed action plan identifying their needs and showing how staff will promote and address them. Measurable objectives are specified with named persons to implement them. Good use is made of local agencies and a range of professionals to support young people's diverse needs. The action plans support the overall objective of young people's placements and contribute to helping prepare them for adulthood. Staff ensure young people know what objectives they are working towards and how they will be supported to attain them.

The home has established a system for regularly reviewing and updating young people's placement plans. The system includes a monthly, internal review of the plans although elements are updated as and when events or developments occur. Young people are invited to record their views about their care and future plans prior to their statutory reviews and to attend and participate in the meetings, which take place every six months or so. This ensures young people feel involved in decision making about their lives.

Young people are supported to maintain very close links with important people in their lives. Staff regularly communicate with family members and young people's social workers to ensure contact is facilitated. Staff readily give practical support to young people to make contact possible. Family members and friends are welcomed into the home. This ensures young people develop a social network which will support them when they leave the home.

Young people are fully consulted about their day-to-day care, future plans and general decision making in the home. They have very positive relationships with staff and freely talk to them about lots of different issues. Visits from social workers and an independent advocate provide young people with further opportunities to voice their opinions.

Staff clearly value young people and strive to offer them good quality care. The newly appointed staff team initially struggled to establish firm boundaries for young people. However, these have now been successfully negotiated and implemented. This offers young people a sense of security. Staff are respectful to young people and listen and act on what they have to say.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Young people are supported to develop independence skills to prepare them for adulthood. Their action plans reflect the varying degree of assistance they require to prepare them practically and emotionally for leaving care. Pathway plans are in place for young people and initial objectives are incorporated into their overall action plan. Leaving care workers liaise with care staff to support young people. Young people are encouraged to develop skills in a range of areas. Currently, these include buying food on a budget, meal preparation and household chores. The tasks are linked to an incentive scheme and are revised as young people demonstrate their competency.

Young people live in a comfortable and homely environment that meets their needs. Good quality decoration, furniture and furnishings are provided and the home is well equipped. Young people say the house is 'too posh'. However, they also say they enjoy living there. Young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms and make good use of the personal and communal space available to them. The home is not conspicuous as a children's home and is close to social and community facilities.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people's individual needs are effectively addressed and they are supported to learn about other cultures. Staff ensure young people maintain contact with their family and other important people in their lives. They support young people to establish and maintain peer relationships and to make effective use of community facilities. Young people's views are taken into account and are acted upon. Their rights are respected and they are helped to understand that they have to take responsibility for their actions.

The home has a comprehensive booklet which explains its purpose and function. This is made available to all interested persons. A young person's leaflet is also available in small and large print. However, the latter is being revised with the assistance of young people, to improve the format and make it more child-friendly. Both documents provide details explaining how the home operates. This helps young people to know how they will be cared for and advises interested persons about what services they can expect from the home.

The culture of the home is open, friendly and child-centred. Staff are clear about the lines of responsibility in the home. Communication between staff is effective; there is a daily handover session and staff meetings take place on a fortnightly basis. This provides opportunities for staff to review young people's care and revise their practice to ensure they are consistent and effective in meeting young people's needs.

The appointment of additional staff in recent weeks to bring the team up to full capacity mean staffing levels are over required levels on some shifts. This can feel a little oppressive at times for the young people but is being managed as sensitively as possible. A balance is being achieved between males and females in the team.

All but one member of care staff holds a professional qualification in caring for children. Staff are committed to continuing professional development and attend on going training relevant to their tasks and the needs of the young people.

Monthly monitoring visits to the home are carried out by representatives of the department and county councillors. Matters requiring action are followed up in a timely manner by the manager.

Young people's records are well organised and contain up-to-date information about them, including relevant documents from their placing authority. Young people are encouraged to read and sign documents which describe how they will be cared for and helped to develop.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure behaviour management plans are comprehensive in covering all areas of concerns (NMS 22)
- ensure sufficient information is consistently held in staff files (NMS 27)
- ensure keyworking sessions are coordinated to follow through topics and issues. (NMS 7)

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# Residential Childcare Review Cheshire East

**October 2009**

**Jill Thorburn**

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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Legal Definition**

The legal definition of a Children's Home is defined under Section 1 of the Care Standards Act 2000 is:

An establishment which provides care and accommodation wholly, or mainly for children. The definition applies to private, voluntary and local council children's homes, and both mainstream and special boarding schools accommodating or arranging accommodation for any child over 259 days a year. Hospitals of any description are excluded.

All Children's Homes now have to be registered by Ofsted. Ofsted combines the work of Social Services Inspectorate, the Audit Commission Joint Review Team and National Care Standards Commission.

All Children's Homes are Regulated and inspected by Ofsted against 36 National Minimum Standards (NMS). These NMS are based on Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

Ofsted has a wide range of registration and inspection functions within all sectors, local authority, private and voluntary children's homes and deals with complaints about registered services such as children's homes.

All Homes have announced inspections once a year and several which are unannounced. A report is issued by Ofsted following each inspection which has to be responded within 14 days with a comprehensive Action Plan by those responsible for the Home. The Commission has the power to de-register a Home or a Provider and the power to enforce NMS via criminal prosecution.

The Children Act 1989 provides a comprehensive framework for the care and protection of all children and young people in need, including those living away from home. Local authorities have a specific duty under section 22 of that Act to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of each child they look after.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 amends the Children Act 1989; strengthening the legislative framework underpinning the care system and putting in place the structures to enable children and young people to receive high quality care and support. Amongst other provisions the Act requires local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient suitable accommodation within their area and improves care planning by strengthening the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer.

## 1.2 The Purpose of Residential Children's Homes

To provide safe and stable accommodation for children and young people who have experienced emotional trauma.

To provide continuity of care for the young person as they move towards independence with a focus on both their emotional and practical needs.







To assist in personal development of young people focusing on self-esteem, building trusting relationships and learning social skills to semi-independent skills.

To actively promote the value of education and secure full-time education for young people who need it.

The residential home should provide a therapeutic environment, in its widest sense, where young people are encouraged to explore and express their feelings in a way that will enable them to resolve conflict both internally and externally in a positive way.

The main objective is that young people will be given the necessary support to enable them to either return to their own or substitute families or to remain until they reach adulthood.

Children's homes should be able to:

-  Demonstrate an improvement in the child's physical and emotional wellbeing.
-  Identify the risks to the child and put in place measures to reduce those risks.
-  Demonstrate how the child's cultural and religious needs are met.
-  Demonstrate how the child lives safely in the home.
-  Identify and show how the child's educational needs are met and how the home promotes a learning environment.
-  Demonstrate how the child's views are actively sought and heard.



## 2.0 Care Population Information

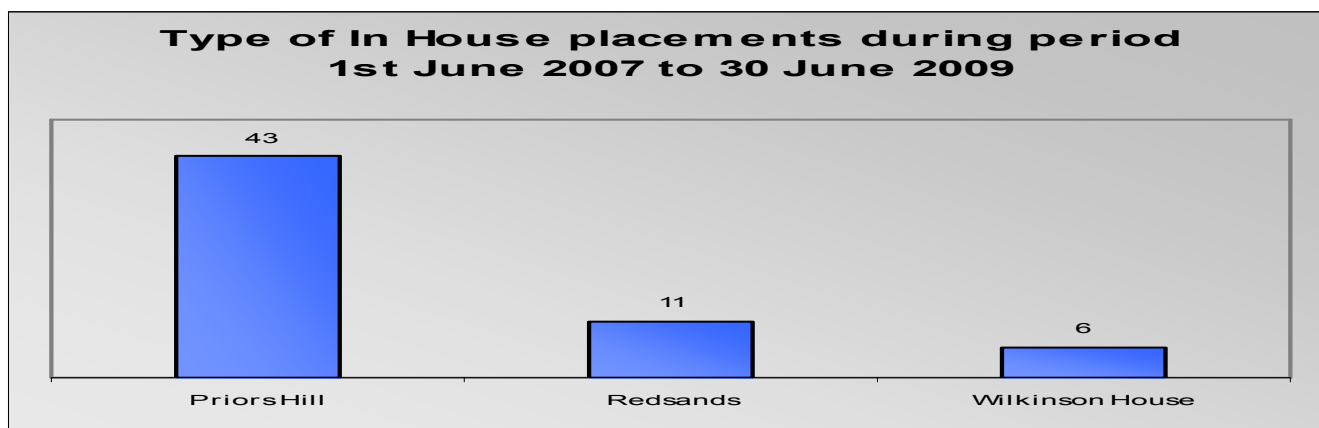
As of April 2009 Cheshire East had a care population of approximately 400 children who were looked after. Of these 26 were residing in residential care homes. This percentage of 6.5% of children placed in residential provision is considerably lower than the national average of 13% of looked after children.

## 2.1 Demographic Information

Of those children 20 were placed in residential units which were in the local authority and 6 were in care homes outside of the local authority. 60% of those children were placed in residential schools or in residential homes with on-site schooling. 25% were placed in privately run residential care homes. 15% were living in Cheshire West and Chester residential care homes.

In March 2009 there were three residential care homes in Cheshire East. These were Redsands, Priors Hill and Wilkinson House, which is a commissioned service provided by Together Trust. Redsands ceased to be a care home when it was closed in April 2009.

In the two year period leading up to this review there were 60 placements of children within these residential homes. The following chart details the numbers of children placed in each for the period of June 07 – June 09.

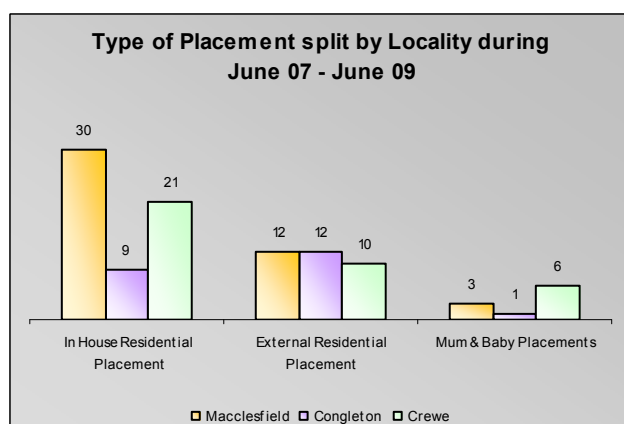
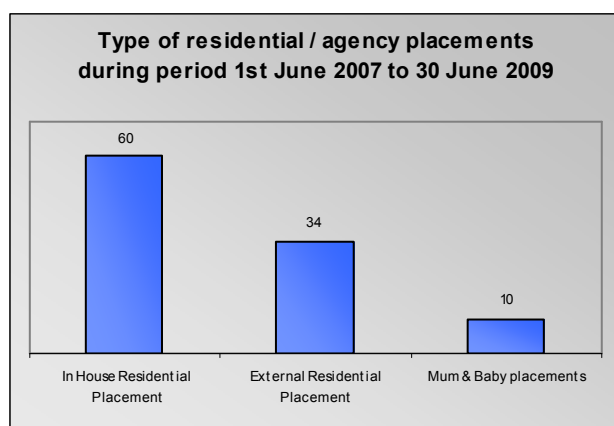


For information available for the two year period leading up to this residential review data has been gathered which is helpful in determining levels of need for residential placements over a longer period of time. During the period June 07 – June 09 there have been 104 residential placements made in Cheshire East, the following

diagrams show the type of residential placement and the type of placement split by locality during this period

## 2.2 Placements

The following tables demonstrate the nature of the placements made in the two year period leading up to this residential review as well as the locality of the home area of the children placed.



Over this period 58% of placements made were to in-house residential provision. 33% of children were placed in out of borough residential placements and 9% were placed in mother and baby care placements. There are currently no mother and baby foster placements available and therefore only private external provision was available.

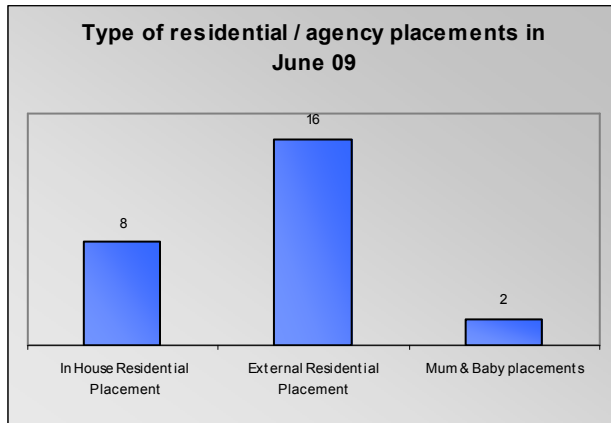
When exploring the local areas the children come from it appears that the majority are from the Macclesfield area. For those placed in in-house residential care 50% are from Macclesfield, 15% from Congleton and 35% from Crewe. It is quite possible that the numbers of children is much higher than would be expected in the Macclesfield area because the emergency bed was in that locality and therefore more children entered in-house care through that route.

Again in external care home provision 35% are Macclesfield children, 35% are from Congleton and 29% from Crewe. This shows that there is consistently a high level of referrals for residential care from the Macclesfield area.

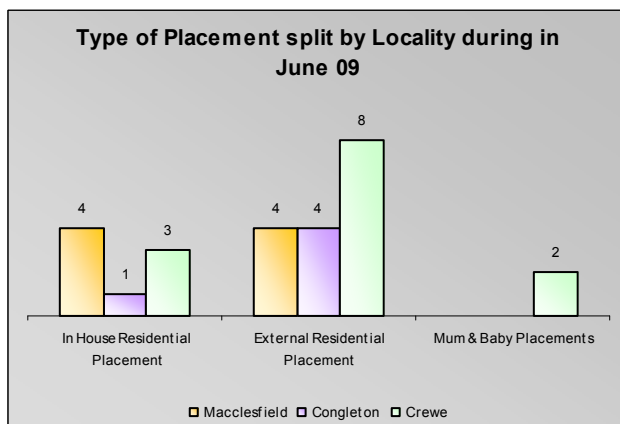
The figures are a little different for Mother and Baby placements whereby the majority of these children 60% are from the Crewe area, 10% from Congleton and 30% from the Macclesfield area.

**Given that the figures for in-house residential care may slightly skew the figures approximately between 30-40% of all children looked after in residential care in Cheshire East are from the Macclesfield area.**

As of the end of June 2009 there were only 26 residential placements and the following diagrams show the type of residential placement that the current 26 young people are placed in.



There were 3 children at that time placed in Cheshire West and Chester Council's homes following the changes brought in by the local government review.



When looking at a snap shot of the placements in June 2009 again 50% of those children placed in-house were from the Macclesfield area. 13% were from Congleton and 38% from Crewe.

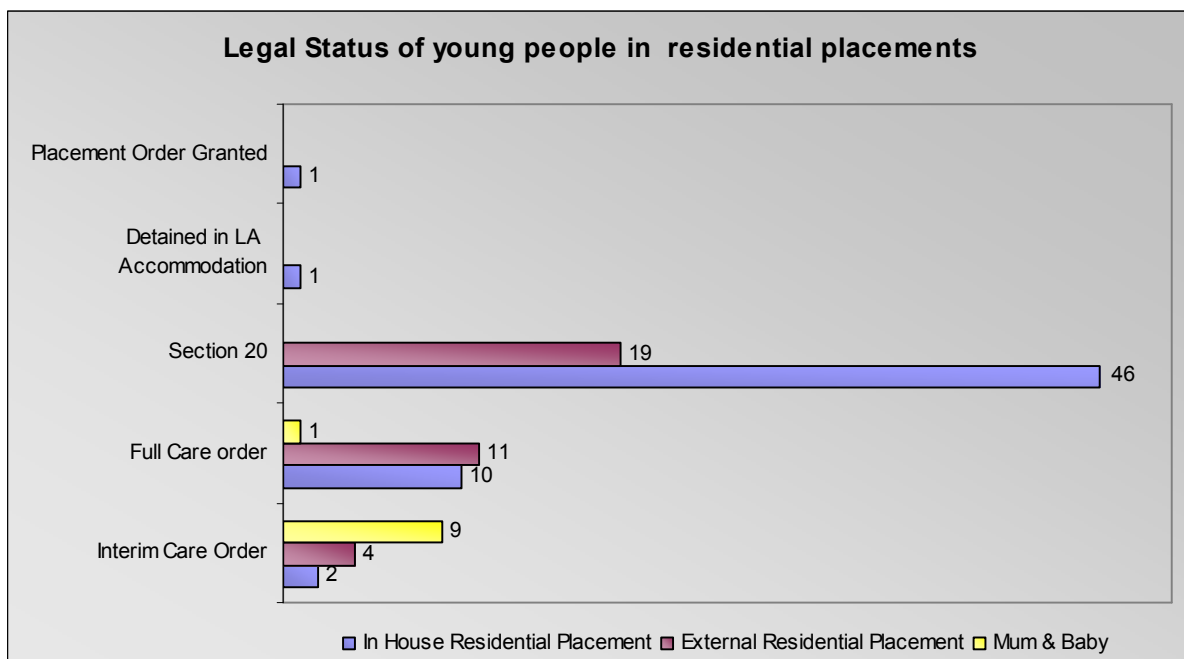
50% of children placed in external residential placements were from Crewe with 25% from both Macclesfield and Congleton.

In June 2009 there were two children placed in mother and baby homes and they were both from Crewe.

**When considering the total numbers of children placed in residential homes in June 2009 36% were from Macclesfield, 14% from Congleton and 50% from the Crewe area. This is likely to be the correct proportion of looked after children requiring residential care in Cheshire East which is very important in considering future need and location of resources.**

### 2.3 Legal status of the residential care population

When looking at the general care population figures, excluding those in mother and baby placements and those compulsorily accommodated, it appears that there is a disproportionate number of looked after children placed in homes who are section 20 accommodated. This figure accounts for 71% of all children placed and is probably linked to the fact they have been taken into care in their teenage years. 23% are subject to full care orders and 7% subject to interim care orders.



### 3.0 Budgetary Information

The figures were taken from PSS EX1 (March 2008) so will not have included inflationary increase for this year.

Gross cost for children in care homes in Cheshire East was £4,318,000 with the average weekly cost for a looked after child in an in-house care home placement being £3,412 / week. The average cost of a looked after child placed in a children's home which is outside of the local authority provision is £3,562 / week. For comparison purposes the average cost of a child placed in foster care is £438 / week.

#### Cost of Residential Care Provision 2009-2010

The table below shows a breakdown of each of the residential care homes giving their current budget and projected expenditure figure at the time of the review.

Residential Home	Current Budget	Projected Expenditure
Alderley House	£305,965	£643,800
Mottram House	£109,421	£330,589
Langley House	£270,768	£637,868
Home A	£500,000	
Home B	£500,000	
Wilkinson House	£201,928	£301,054

## 4.0 Current Provision

In June 2009 there were four types of children's homes placements available for children in Cheshire East. The places were in Priors Hill and Wilkinson House.

Priors Hill has a number of different units performing different functions. Alderley House is the main residential care provision designed to provide long term placements for children. Langley House which is a short term short breaks unit for children with disabilities and Mottram House a separate unit containing two emergency beds. Priors Hill is a large centre on the outskirts of Macclesfield. The premises is a detached two storey building situated in a housing estate. The building has been separated into five separate sections providing different types of care. At the time of the review only three of these were being used and the others were empty.

### 4.1 Alderley House

Alderley house is a home which caters for up to six young people and provides long term care placements. Since June 2007 there have been 13 young people placed in Alderley House.



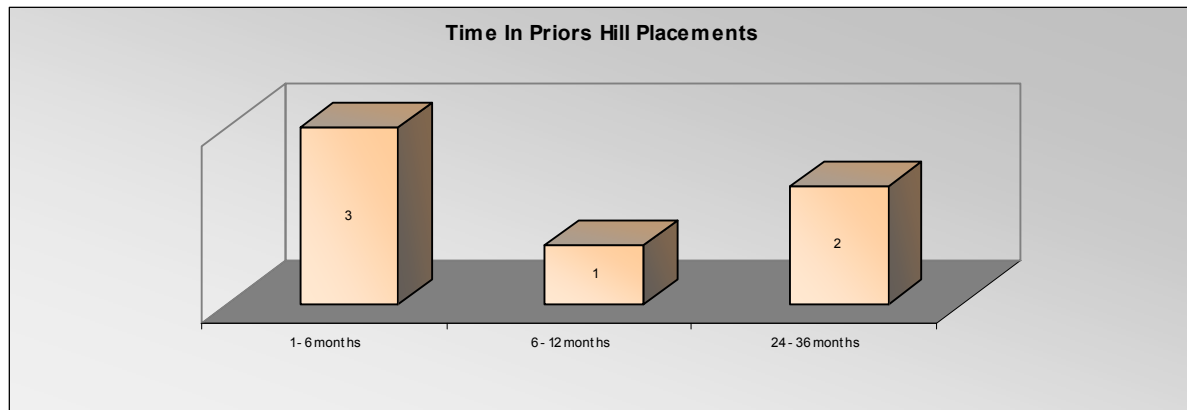
Of those 7 were young women and 6 young men. Their age at the point of their admission was as follows:

Age on admission	Number of young people
12	1
13	4
14	2
15	6

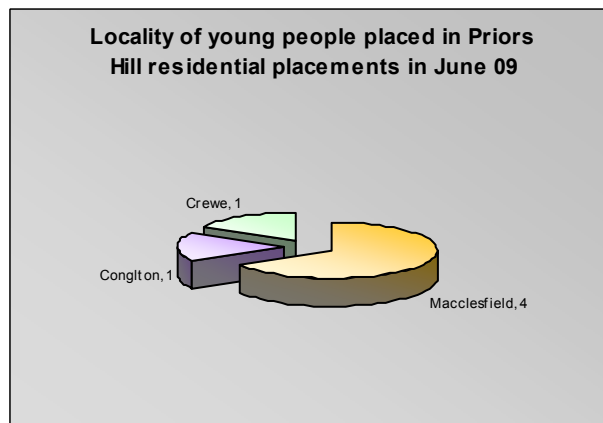
As a number of young people have remained for some time in Alderley House the average age of the residents is now 16 years old, with 33% of residents being aged 15, 33% aged 16 and 33% aged 17.



Of the young people who lived in Alderley during this time the length of time they stayed in the home varied considerably from one young person staying only for one month to another who was there for over two years. The vast majority of children remained there for between one and two years so the home is meeting its statement of purpose and function as a long term provision.



The vast majority of children placed in Alderley House originated from the Macclesfield area. At the time of this review 67% were from the Macclesfield area. This proportion remained largely the same for the two year period preceding this review.



In exploring where the young people went to once they left Alderley House there was a variety of designations but the majority left residential care.

Placement / destination	Number of young people
Living independently	3
Homeless	1
Supported Lodgings	1
Returned home	2
SWITCH (treatment foster care)	1
Keys (therapeutic placement)	1



Private care home	1
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### **Quality of Care & Physical Environment**

Priors Hill was inspected by Ofsted on two occasions recently. These inspections took place in March and July 2009. The outcome of both these inspections is that the home was rated inadequate on both occasions. A notice to improve was issued in March and July. Redands children's home also received very poor inspection reports which also stated the level of care being provided was inadequate.

Although the last inspection report recognised that there was some good and satisfactory practices that promote children's welfare these were not consistently applied. Ofsted were of the view 'that shortfalls in practice mean that the health, welfare and safety of children are compromised'.

The quality of care being offered to the children in in-house residential services is very poor. The material standards are not acceptable. One young person's bedroom was very shabby, with curtains hanging off, a bed which was very old and tatty, dirty and stained carpet as well as a broken set of drawers. The level of acceptance of these poor conditions was worrying in both the staff team as well as by the young person himself. His room at best was sparse and impersonal and at worse could be described as extremely poor. Worryingly this young person had lived in the home for 3 years and expressed views that made me believe he thought he was worth no more than what he was experiencing.

The rest of the houses in the residential home were dirty, tired and messy looking. There was graffiti which had been left present and there were no home comforts which would be expected in a children's home. There had been an attempt to make the living room in Alderley look a little like a 'normal' living room but there was also holes in the walls which had been left unfilled. There were again no home comforts like lamps and pictures.

The building is simply unsuitable for a children's home. It is a series of corridors and many rooms which are unused. It must be difficult to staff effectively to ensure appropriate vigilance. The building is an old 60s type building in its own grounds in a fairly run down part of Macclesfield, which appears to have its own social problems. Ofsted agreed in their inspection report from April 2009 that the 'location and standard of the premises is not meeting the young people's needs'.

The grounds are not appropriately maintained. The grass was overgrown and the flower beds need attention. There was also litter all around the door which is routinely used by the young people. On my first visit there was a condom lying by that door and on both occasions cigarette butts thrown on the ground.

The care planning for the children seemed disorganised and I was informed by the manager there was a lot of drift in children's care plans. He felt this was because

social workers, once the children were placed, appeared to back off. When asked about the residential staff's role in ensuring plans were progressed I got a response which was a bit passive and defeatist. At the time when I visited three of the eight young people had plans which involved them leaving residential care but the plans had not been progressed.

Overall I felt that leadership in the residential home was extremely poor. The senior manager with overall responsibility had only visited the home once between two inadequate Ofsted inspections. The home had been without a registered manager since September 2008 and it has taken twelve months for a temporary registered manager to be put in place.

Ofsted also picked up on the fact that there 'had been shortfalls in the monitoring of the operation of the home on behalf of the local authority'.

The home manager had not received adequate supervision or support for the previous 8 months and was 'floundering'. The manager was in an acting up position into his first management post. The manager had also not received an appraisal of his performance and professional development planning.

This is a large organisation to control and the management of such a big site would require some experience or good quality leadership and management. The regulation 33 report indicates that staff have regular supervision but that appraisals have not been completed. I viewed the quality of the manager's supervision and it was inadequate. There was no focus on feedback or professional development and the content was simply a list of tasks which needed to be done. Ofsted agreed that 'whilst he is child focussed and competent in many areas, he is not sufficiently trained or supported as a new manager'.

The prevailing culture in the home is that of an institution. There was no flavour of 'normal' family life and both staff and the children were very institutionalised. The staff appeared to be largely unaware of their professional caring role. There has been a much higher than expected level of restraint of children; complaints from children; allegations against staff members from children and staff subject to disciplinary procedures. Overall the staff appear to be poorly trained and I detected undercurrents of resistance and suspicion of change. Particularly the senior residential workers demonstrated this during my visits.

I picked up a feeling of defeat, apathy and cynicism from the staff I spoke to. I only witnessed one positive interaction between a staff member and a child during two lengthy visits to Priors Hill. Appropriate boundaries were not enforced such as children swearing and making threats of violence towards staff members which went unchallenged by the staff who heard them.

The quality of care was very poor. This very poor quality provision is costing the local authority a projected **£968,457 per annum** and represents extremely poor value for money.

It was reported in a recent regulation 33 report it that all the policies are out of date and that the statement of purpose and function appears to have replaced the use of the policies and procedures folder. Of particular concern was the absence of the child protection procedures and the equality and diversity policy. The control and restraint policy was also reported to be out of date and the care planning document contained no information regarding education or health planning.

The lack of policies and procedures was impacting on the staff team's ability to provide a safe environment for the children. Staff had reported to the manager conducting the regulation 33 visit that they were concerned over the changes brought in whereby they were not to report minor criminal activity within the home to the police as they felt they had no alternative strategies available to them. Ofsted picked up on the point that the employment of behaviour management strategies is 'sometimes good but not consistently applied'.

In analysing the practices within Priors Hill it is apparent that some staff do not have the skills to work effectively in that environment. Although there is a strong message from Ofsted which is that there are some parts of the practice which are of a good standard, the prevailing message is that there is a distinct lack of consistency which is leaving children a risk.

#### 4.2 Emergency Beds

Priors Hill also has a section called Mottram House which has provided an emergency bed function and consists of 2 emergency beds. Mottram house is physically joined onto Alderley House but staffed separately. This facility was available to both Cheshire West and Cheshire East to place children in an emergency up until July 2009 when admissions ceased following two adverse Ofsted inspection reports for Priors Hill.

Since March 2007 there were 64 times when children were placed in the emergency bed in Mottram. On some occasions some children were placed more than once. Of these children 30 were young women and 34 young men. The age range was between aged 9 and 17 years but with the vast majority of admissions being children in their mid teens as shown below.

Age at point of admission	Number of children
9	1
10	1
11	1
12	3
13	14
14	15
15	18
16	4
17	1
DOB not available	6

Many of the children stayed for very short periods of time and because of that some information was not available when exploring where they went to following their stay in Mottram House. However, the following table shows where the children went once they left the provision.

Next destination / Placement	Number of children	% of all residents of Mottram
Home	18	28%
Alderley House	8	13%
Custody	3	5%
Foster care	14	22%
Redsands	5	8%
Armthorpe Drive	2	3%
Together Trust	1	2%
Meadows	1	2%
Wilkinson House	1	2%
Independence	1	1%
Details unavailable*	10	16%

\*Note: the 10 young people for whom the details of their next placement was unavailable it would be reasonable to assume that they did not remain in care as this information would exist if they had and therefore likely to have also returned home to parents or the information would be available. If this is the case then 44% of all young people (28) who used the emergency beds were able to be placed back home without the risk of them being subject to significant harm. Therefore it could be argued that they did not require admission into care in the first place but rather some skilled intervention to enable difficulties at home to be resolved.

### Good Practice Recommendations for Priors Hill

- Staff should be interacting with young people to provide them with stimulating activities which take into account their race, culture, language, religion, interests, abilities and disabilities. All young people should be encouraged, with support and guidance, to undertake individual activities and become members of local community groups. All activities should have a written risk assessment completed before being undertaken.
- Young people should be given individual support and guidance and encouraged to enter into the decision making process around unit routines and procedures through weekly “Young People’s Meetings” and should be

regularly consulted on changes that affect them especially the closure of the home. Older young people should be undergoing Independent Living Skills work which will include budgeting, Health and Safety, D.I.Y. and a variety of domestic skills, to enable them to move on successfully to independent living.

- An incident and intervention and monitoring process should be implemented to ensure that any patterns or trigger points can be easily identified between young people and residential staff and measures should be put in place to counteract repetition, and evidence any reductions or increase in incidents.
- Young people and staff should be taking part in all aspects of group living together and staff should ensure that young people are cared for in a way that respects their individual dignity and maintains a safe and welcoming environment.
- The manager should be providing staffing levels to meet individual need based on risk assessments.
- There should be a far greater focus on improving educational outcomes of the children living in Priors Hill. All children need to have a personal education plan in place which is reviewed through key worker sessions.
- Staff need to enable the young people have more opportunities to enjoy themselves, more involvement in decision-making, and a "cosier", more "home-like" environment
- Staff should be more proactive in ensuring that they help to make the setting a place where the young people can see that they were helped to turn their lives around and where they were able to have good experiences and new opportunities.
- Residential care staff need to work in partnership with their corporate colleagues and various other organisations in order to provide young people with support guidance and build on self esteem and confidence in order to ensure all young people's needs are met and that they receive an excellent service to enable their development and ensure that each young person reaches their potential.

### 4.3 Langley

The material standards and cleanliness were better on Langley house. This resource is predominately a short breaks unit for children with disabilities and additional needs. This is the information contained within the homes statement of purpose and function, however, there is a young man who has been living there as his home for a number of years. He describes his care as being very good and attributes his development and positive life choices to the quality of his key workers. There are problems with him living in this way in what is an institution.

He is required by staff to go to his room at 10pm even though he is seventeen years old. He was required to stop using the computer at that time as the night staff required the room it is kept in. This is not meeting his needs. Even though he has lived there for a number of years his room is labelled 'Red Room' rather than it having been made into his room. He needed additional help to tidy up his room and was advised that there was nowhere in the building where he belongings could be stored and therefore all of his possessions were in boxes around his room. This again did not give a homely feel to this young man's home.

Many of the doors were locked and the young man had to ask for staff to come and open them as he showed me around his home. A recent regulation 33 report states that the manager conducting the inspection was concerned that this young man was effectively 'locked onto' Langley unit as parts of the site are locked. This inspection visit took place in April and this situation remained unchanged two months later.

The set up in the kitchen did not allow the young man to be able to assist in food preparation as the only part he was able to reach was a very small area of work surface which had been lowered so as he could use it as he is a wheelchair user. As this young man is rapidly approaching adulthood he should have been receiving support to develop independence skills for the time he comes to leave care. He also seemed to be completely cut off from the young people his own age who live in Alderley House.

The material standards in Langley appear slightly better than the other houses however it is very old fashioned looking. The front room, I was advised, was rarely used by the children and the couches were made from a plastic covered material which if you sat on them shot onto the floor as they were very slippy. I was advised that they used to have material covers but these got taken off as they got soiled.

The bedrooms for the children who came as part of a respite provision were appropriate and nicely decorated. The staff team largely seemed well engaged with the children. It has been reported though that there is an over reliance on putting children in front of the television rather than engaging them in meaningful activity.

The care provided in Langley is of an acceptable standard, however, this could be improved by it being provided in a more suitable building with appropriate resources such as enough shower rooms. There also needs to be a review of the activities provided to the children and arguably the TV should be removed to improve the opportunity for meaningful play and activities.

The cost of providing staff for Langley unit is projected to be £606,420 this financial year. With all other associated costs this unit has a projected expenditure of £606,420 although the budget set was £270,768.

The unit has six beds providing short breaks to disabled children although only five have been used for this purpose for a number of years.

#### 4.4 Wilkinson House

The contract price for Wilkinson House is £593,905 per annum and as this contract was in place before the local government review it is split between Cheshire West and East on a 50:50 basis, meaning that three beds are available to Cheshire East. In addition to the cost of this home there has been additional resources put in to support educational activity. This is a six bedded home currently registered to provide for children aged 8-12 with a remit to work in a therapeutic way through the use of a play therapist to assist the child in reaching a stage where they are able to be fostered.

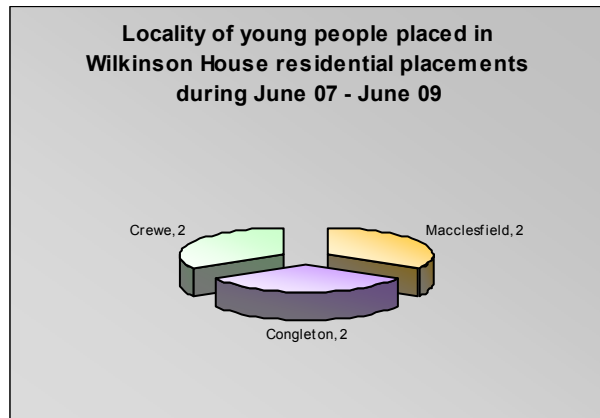
If fully occupied the unit costs for Wilkinson House are £1904 / week / child. At the time of this review Wilkinson House had three young people in residence with no referrals pending meaning that the current unit cost per child is £3808 / week.

The age of the children placed in Wilkinson House over the last two years have ranged from 10 to 14 years old, with the majority being aged 11 years.

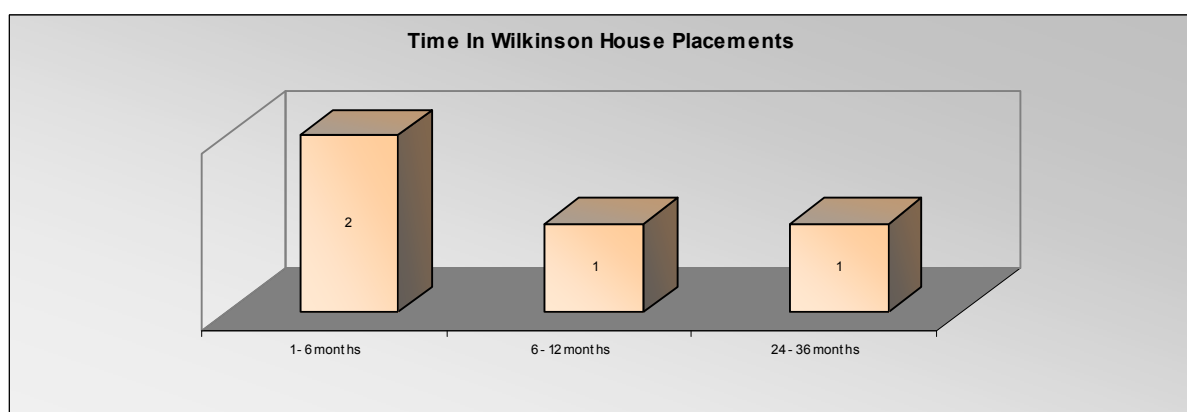




The referrals to Wilkinson House have been received evenly from each of the Cheshire East localities. However, during the time of the review there were only two children placed both of whom were from the Crewe area.



The children placed in June 09 were both boys one of whom age 10 and the other 11. Both boys had experienced a number of foster care breakdowns prior to their admission into Wilkinson House. One of the young people placed had been there for over two years the other for more than 12 months. The statement of purpose and function is clear this is a resource which is meant to be a 'short term' intervention to enable children to return to family based care.



Approximately half of the children leaving Wilkinson House have been placed with foster carers after their stay.

## Quality of Care

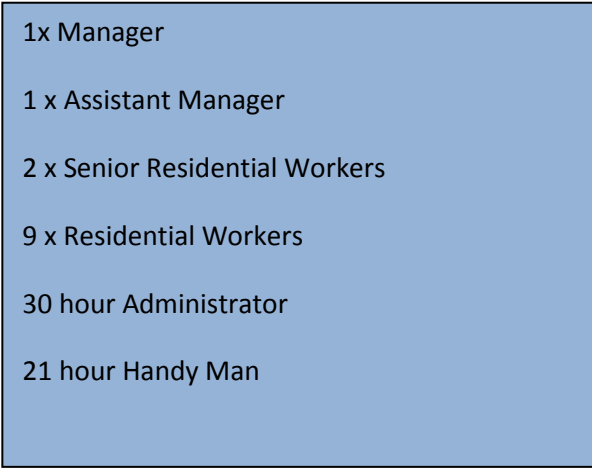
The quality of care is of a good standard. The children appear to be happy and settled. The care planning and key work arrangements are very good and good account is taken of the children's needs.

An Ofsted inspection took place on the 18 June 2009 and the overall standard of care was deemed to be of a 'good' standard. Ofsted deemed that in areas of enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and being healthy Wilkinson House is exceeding minimum standards. In terms of making sure the children are healthy this was deemed by Ofsted to be 'outstanding'. There are excellent health care plans in place for each child. There were only two recommendations made by Ofsted in their inspection which were around water safety and keeping records of staff training.

The house is a large detached property set in its own grounds in Sandbach. Each of the children has their own bedroom and there are plenty bathrooms and living rooms. Although it is on a busy road there is a large garden and play area to the rear of the property. The building is owned by Cheshire East but maintained by the Together Trust. The property is warm and welcoming, well equipped, spacious and in a good state of repair.

The home provides specialist care for children aged between the age of eight and twelve on their admission. The home provides care to children who have emotional and behaviour difficulties.

The staffing complement is:



1x Manager  
 1 x Assistant Manager  
 2 x Senior Residential Workers  
 9 x Residential Workers  
 30 hour Administrator  
 21 hour Handy Man

There is no use of agency staff as the Together Trust operate a 'pool' of peripatetic staff.

There is a strong education ethos in the home and all children in placement were reported to be doing well in their education. One of the requirements of being placed in Wilkinson House is that the child must have a school placement.

One of the strengths of the home was the fact it ensures there is a high level of activities available for the children. There is evidence of a programme of summer activities to ensure the children make the most of their summer holiday. The type of activities included a summer holiday caravanning, camping trips and a two night break for each of the children with their key worker. During the term times children are encouraged to take part in activities such as horse riding, canoeing, football and cadets.

The leadership in the home was of a very good standard. The registered manager had very good knowledge of her area of work and was an experienced and capable people manager. There was also a good infrastructure and support available to her through her through Together Trust.

The quality of care being provided to Cheshire East's children in Wilkinson House is of a good standard.

## **Issues**

Given the level of occupancy it is questionable whether there is a need for such a large resource in Cheshire East for this age group. For the current unit cost good quality treatment foster care beds could be commissioned which would allow children to remain in a family setting while addressing their needs for therapeutic intervention.

Children were unable to remain in their home area as both children in placement were from the Crewe area.

The age of the children being admitted to Wilkinson house is of a concern. It can be argued that children who are aged 8-12 should be placed within a family setting wherever possible. It is concerning that only 50% of the children who have been in Wilkinson House were able to move on to a foster care placement as this should have been higher. For children who stay in residential placement for a considerable period such as those in Wilkinson House it is very difficult for them not to become institutionalised and be unable to make the transition into family based living.

Although the work being carried out with the children is of a very good standard I would advise that the children need to be of an older age range at the point of admission.

Cheshire West commissions 50% of the home and currently their occupancy levels are only 33% and there are no children on a waiting list. This does not present good value for money as their unit costs are currently standing at £3883/ child per week I am concerned that should Cheshire West choose to decommission this service it would have great financial implications on Cheshire East as the service would become unviable. The current contract is in place until March 2011. Cheshire West and Chester are of the view that they do not require residential beds for children as young as the age group for Wilkinson house and believe that the age on admission needs to be raised to meet their requirements.

The current contract is in place to the 31 March 2011. However, there has recently been a contract meeting to look at the viability of extending the age group of children at the time of their admission. The level of occupancy is increasingly threatening the contract. If children between the age of 12 and fourteen were admitted to Wilkinson House this would change this situation.

#### **4.5 Outcomes for Children in Cheshire East's Residential Care**

In considering the suitability of placements for children in Cheshire East's care it is essential to look at the outcomes once the children come to leave.

This review has taken account of information relating to performance measures detailing the numbers of those who have left residential care and have entered into education, employment and training, whether or not they are living in suitable accommodation and also the proportion of children who have come into contact with the youth justice system.

Although it is recognised that these are relatively crude in terms of measuring outcomes they link closely to the five Every Child Matters outcomes – be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well being.

Of the children and young people who have recently left residential placements 30% are living independently, 10% are reported to be homeless, 10% are in a supported lodgings placement, 20% have returned to live with their parents, 20% have gone to live in a different residential placement s and 10% have gone to live in foster care.

It is interesting to note that 40% of all of those who left care have gone to live within a family based setting. It is concerning that 10% of those young people are described as being homeless as this will impact adversely on their ability to be safe and healthy.

Of the same cohort of young people who have left residential care only 40% are reported to be in employment, education and training. The remaining 60% are

classed as NEET at the time of this review. This obviously has implications in terms of the young people's ability to enjoy and achieve as well as achieving economic well being.

Of the last 22 children to leave residential care only two were not known to the Youth Offending Service(YOS). 68% were known to YOS prior to them being placed in residential care.

It is interesting to note that 23% were convicted of a crime only after their admission into residential care. Of that group 80% of the recorded criminal activity was violence against a person or property. The remaining 20% were convicted of theft. It is quite possible that all of these offences were as a direct link to them living in residential care.

This is an incredibly high proportion of children looked after in residential care in Cheshire East. This would lead me to believe that there is a culture of criminalisation of children in residential care in Cheshire East. In terms of making a positive contribution and enjoying and achieving this will have a massive impact into adulthood as so many will be leaving with a criminal conviction.

## 5.0 New Provision

In Crewe there are 2 new 4 bedded children's homes are fully furnished and registered. They are currently at the point of being able to be opened as soon as the staff are selected to work in them.

Home 'A' is a 4 bedded home in an established community to the north of Crewe Town Centre. It is a large detached house located on a main through road. It is within a nice area of other family type houses. It is an extended home with gardens to front, rear and each side of the property. There are open play areas nearby and it is within walking distance of the town centre and is well served with local schools.

The bedrooms have been designed as 'blank canvasses' each with a different colour scheme. It is anticipated that Home A will be adapted to become more accessible to all children, young people and their families. Work is currently underway to assess how best to do this. The home has been renovated and furnished to a high standard and provides a warm and appropriate setting for children to be placed.

Home B is a modern home, situated within a cul-de-sac, with gardens to front, rear and each side of the property. Home B is within walking distance of the town centre and is well served with local schools on the South Cheshire campus.

Close by there is a new college being built. This is a large 'family' home in its own grounds. The houses in the surrounding area are also detached family homes. Work is currently underway to replace the kitchen and make the home fully accessible for children or their family members who are wheelchair users.

The next stage in the development of the new homes is for the staff to be recruited. The job descriptions have been through the job evaluation process and advertising has taken place internally. The jobs advertised are for registered managers, who will hold a social work professional qualification and deputy residential managers. There are also two levels of residential care officers.

A consultant has been brought in to help the Cheshire East to conduct Warner compliant interviews to identify staff suitable to work in the new units. These interviews will take place during November 2009. It is the intention that one of the homes will be up and running and able to have children placed by December 2009.

## 5.1 Feedback from Care Council Visit

Two members of Cheshire East's Children in Care Council made a visit to both new homes to give feedback about the views of young people about the new homes.

When asked about material standards the following feedback was given.

*Both homes were very good...very homely and I think had obviously had input from young people as to what they would want them to look like.*

*They both feel like a home. Not a big 'I'm in care' building! They looked fresh and nice and 'normal'.*

*They both blended in perfectly with the surrounding houses in the neighbourhood.*

*I loved the look of the bedrooms. They are blank canvasses waiting for young people to come and live in them and put their own stamp on them.*

When asked about whether there was anything which should be developed differently the following feedback was received.

*The only thing I can suggest is around accessibility for wheel chair users. The bathroom in Home A could be made accessible. They also need a fixed ramp. Home B could have a downstairs bedroom.*

*In Home A you could make the current office into an accessible bedroom but widening the door frame.*

Other general views offered were:

*I think these houses would definitely suit the needs of teenagers in care.*

*They are so much better than what we have now.*

*If I was a bit younger I would move in tomorrow!*

*I would definitely recommend the new homes to other young people.*

Interestingly one of the concerns held by a member of the care council was that she was worried that young people coming from an 'institution' such as Priors Hill would not be able to adapt to living in a homely setting like the new homes.

The view represented in this visit will be communicated to the whole of the children in care council at the next meeting.

## **5.2 Good Practice Guidance for New Homes**

As noted by the young person from the care council any children transferring from Priors Hill will need a great deal of support to adjust from the way they have been used to living to being able to enjoy living in a new small home setting. It shouldn't be taken for granted that just because the young people would be moving into much nicer living conditions that this would be an easy transition to make.

There needs to be a great deal of work conducted with the staff who have been successfully appointed to the posts within the new homes too as many of the staff also display symptoms of being institutionalised. This is evident in the over reliance of restraint and use of the police. In high quality children's homes there are many other ways in which behaviour is managed.

### **Staffing recommendations**

Although at times of crisis agency staff are crucial to ensure that staffing levels are sustained, this is often a costly option which does not provide consistency or effective continuity for children.

Consideration should be given to employing sessional workers from the local work force (teachers, teaching assistants and social work support staff) under dual engagement. This would provide a cost effective solution, and build in planned flexibility to the rota, whilst allowing young people to build relationships with these workers.

Rotas should be planned over a minimum of a 12 week period, this allows the manager to plan for annual leave and other times when staffing shortages arise. Any deficits should be covered immediately with the use of sessional workers, the use of agency workers should only be sanctioned by a senior manager once evidence of this need has been investigated and verified. When there is a plan for a child to enter the placement staffing ratios should be reviewed to meet with the young person's plan and risk assessment.



Every Child Matters Outcome	Practice Recommendations for the New Homes
<b>Be Healthy</b>	<p>The key priority, for the home should be to make mealtimes a central focus. Emphasis on meal times should be given a high priority, and all young people and staff on shift should eat together at all times, (whilst on shift should no staff member should consume a meal in the home that is not part of the agreed mealtimes without a child present at the dinner table). Mealtimes need to be normalised for the young people, and staff should utilise this opportunity to discuss the young person's day at school or college in a relaxed environment. Residential staff should also see their role at mealtimes although not explicitly to support children in eating, the introduction of new foods and if applicable table manners. Furthermore no child should be excluded from meal times.</p>
	<p>A cook should be employed at each home with the skills and expertise to create nutritional healthy meals using healthy ingredients. The cook should be able to subtly incorporate ingredients into meals to ensure that they have a healthy balanced diet. For example if a child is reluctant to eat vegetables, a soup or sauce should be prepared using vegetables in manner that is not obvious to the young person and added to the meal, and guarantees that the young person will be consuming their healthy "five a day" quota.</p>
	<p>Taster sessions should be included in the home's weekly programme to educate children on healthy eating and introduce them to foods and food groups they may not have tried. To further enhance this process the young people should be consulted on a weekly basis in relation to the planning of meals, and foods from different cultures should be incorporated into the meal plans on a weekly basis.</p>
	<p>To monitor and improve emotional wellbeing of all young people placed in the home, policies and procedures must be adhered to ensure that every child and young person has someone to talk to they can trust. On placement the role of advocacy services must be explained fully to the young person, including, the positive outcomes that these professionals may bring to the young person. The key worker will enable to young person to engage with these services and be present for all introductory meetings or sessions.</p>
	<p>Healthy lifestyle choices will be fully promoted with the residential setting and participation in sport and physical activity should be encouraged at all times, this includes staff and key workers transporting young people to any agreed activities. Furthermore activities should be organised within the home to ensure that all young people participate in a least one 'healthy session' per week either individually or as part of a group.</p> <p>Sessions should be organised and arranged in an age appropriate manner to explain the consequences of taking drugs alcohol and tobacco. Sexual health should be openly discussed and promoted. Consideration should be given to utilising the looked after children's nurse or other suitably qualified professional to deliver these sessions</p>

<b>Stay Safe</b>	<p>All young people who are placed in residential homes should have accurate risk assessments in place; This should be undertaken between the social worker, the key worker and in consultation with the young person. Their 'timeout' factors and exhibited behaviours must be discussed and plans put in place to allow staff to quickly recognise trigger behaviours and implement strategies to de-escalate the situation quickly and effectively. Therefore speaking and consulting with the young person will allow the young person time to reflect on their triggers and provide staff with the best solution to deal with that situation. All risk assessments should have clear plans and contingencies, and should be transparent in approach and should prove an effective support mechanism for all staff working with the young person to understand the risks and associated 'trigger points'.</p>
	<p>For children with additional needs there should be clear policies and procedures to ensure that there is an adequate package of facilities and activities to improve and support the transition to adult services, for example, 'improve transition arrangements from children's social care to adult social care services', this should always be undertaken with the Leaving Care Worker and should form the basis of the Transition or Pathway Plan.</p>
	<p>A baseline monitoring, evaluation process should be put in place to monitor and record incidents and of bullying, harassment and behaviour management incidents and the Registered Manager should monitor closely the levels of these. If there is evidence to suggest that individual staff are routinely being involved in any incidents of this nature it must be addressed as part of the supervision process. Furthermore the registered manager will seek solutions to actively decrease the number of incidence of bullying, harassment and sanctions.</p>
	<p>Ensure that registered managers and their deputies are able to implement and are fully conversant with safe recruitment practices. The registered manager must ensure that all staff employed in the residential home are skilled to care for children who have been abused and neglected, and have sufficient experience and knowledge to recognise the signs of abuse (including its recognition in non-verbal children) dealing with disclosures or suspicions of abuse, safe care skills, skills to support positive behaviour and ways of boosting and maintaining the child's self-esteem.</p>
	<p>Ensure that systems are in place to enable young people to report to appropriate staff concerns about potential risk to themselves, with appropriate response and without reprisals. Young people should be made aware of these procedures when first placed in the home.</p>

<b>Enjoy and Achieve</b>	The key worker should, as part of their role, establish a direct link with designated looked after children's teacher. They must ensure that they are informed of any new developments or concerns and attend any school meetings as a good parent would.
	Key-workers must attend all looked after children's reviews and actively be involved in the planning process for the young person. The key worker must be equipped with skills to appropriately challenge decision making that may disadvantage the young person and seek to identify alternative solutions to such issues.
	Consideration should be given to providing "outreach" support for children who have moved from residential care into foster care. Positive relationships should be encouraged between key workers and young people, and this continued support should be offered to them while they are in a new placement and should be part of the young person's plan. This allows for extended support for new carers and provides the young person with a level of continuity and stability in their new placement.
	<p>Although not always feasible placements for children should always be planned where possible. This allows time to undertake a 'matching' process, and allows the young person time to adjust both physically and emotionally to the move. The young person should be allowed time to say their goodbyes and this is particularly important if the child may have to move schools as this will be another major adjustment in the young person's life.</p> <p>The social worker should liaise with the placement to ensure that as key worker is identified at an early stage in this process, it is vital that the child should meet their planned key worker and that they are provided with an age appropriate understanding of the environment they will be moving to.</p> <p>It is crucial that the young person's room is prepared in readiness for them to move in. This should involve simple steps like allowing the young person to select colour schemes and soft furnishings for their room to help to instil a feeling of belonging.</p>
	The achievements of children and young people with disabilities and their schools is celebrated through a range of activities including head teacher meetings, sharing of good practice. Key workers should be trained to deliver to deliver sports activities for children with disabilities and swimming clubs should established to target young people to learn to swim.

<b>Make a Positive Contribution</b>	A welcome pack should be created by young people which will act as a guide for all young people entering residential care in Cheshire East. It should be appropriate to the young people's age and understanding. The cost for such a project should be relatively small as the children themselves will be the main source of information, and all ideas presented by the young people should be given through consideration any young people should be provided with a full explanation for any ideas or suggestions that cannot be approved.
	Policies and procedures should be implemented to develop or extend volunteering opportunities or activities for young people, they should be undertaken in partnership with the youth service to ensure that young people are engaged in positive behaviours, for example Princes Trust or Millennium Volunteer scheme .
	<p>All professionals employed within Cheshire East will ensure that the young person acquires and understands how an informed and responsible citizen should behave.</p> <p>Cheshire East should implement policies and procedures to ensure that as a corporate parent it does not act to criminalise it's looked after young people.</p>
	Processes need to be implemented to aid early identification of possible or evident offending or negative behaviour. This should always be discussed with the young person, their social worker and if applicable their YOT worker and a planning meeting held to ensure that all professionals formulate a plan on working with the young person to reduce this behaviour whilst educating the young person of the consequences and positive aspects on not being embroiled in this behaviour.
	Young people who have offended or are at risk of offending should be provided with a range of activities and support to assist them in leading law-abiding and constructive lives and to raise their self-esteem. The local authority must ensure that arrangements are in place to address specific educational and training needs of young offenders and to co-ordinate the education of young people who are taken into custody

<b>Achieve Economic Wellbeing</b>	<p>The role of the key worker is vital if a young person is to achieve economic wellbeing they must view their role as crucial and identify and minimise any factors that will prevent the young person from achieving their full potential. The key worker must understand that educational achievement remains the most effective route out of poverty, and that young people need to leave school and be able to earn a living and make the most of their lives. From an employment perspective this means learning how businesses work and developing the skills and qualities that employers need, such as literacy, numeracy, creativity, leadership, problem solving, teamwork, the ability to work independently and an enterprising spirit. The key worker must work with the allocated social worker and Connexions worker to ensure that all these key skills are met and appropriate action plans implemented in instances of unmet needs.</p>
	<p>All young people will have an up to date PEP and the key worker will liaise regularly school and allocated worker on any issues in relation to school, behaviour attendance or achievement, if any are identified to allow for early intervention. Realistic goals and targets must be set and monitored for the young person in accordance with their ability. Goals achieved should be rewarded as any good parent would do and the residential home should have monies set aside to “<i>treat</i>” the young person if they have done well in a particular aspect. Furthermore all young people at the age of 14 will have a Learner Entitlement and Action Plan which sets out what they can expect from their education provision in Cheshire East.</p>
	<p>The key worker as corporate parent will ensure all professionals involved with young people directly, must emphasise the importance of positive futures after leaving school. The young person must be encouraged to embrace life long learning, employment opportunities and enjoying a positive standard of living. The key worker as part of their role will identify and make the young person aware of their Connexions worker and their joint role in ensuring that the young person is engaged in further education, employment or training when leaving school, as they would aspire for their own children.</p>
	<p>A baseline measurement should be undertaken to measure the achievement of children with a disability and policies and procedures should be implemented to measure this achievement with realistic and aspirational goals set. New initiatives should be introduced as a joint venture with Connexions to prioritise EET for children with a disability.</p>
	<p>All staff employed in the residential home will actively encourage and plan with the young people for the time they come to leave care and provide independence training. Sessions for the young people should be planned from a personal and individual perspective, and should explore themes such as learning how to manage their own money, the roles of banks and financial services. Practical training should be conducted within the home to allow young people to learn how to cook wholesome meals on a budget and young people should be encouraged to attend the supermarket with their key worker to understand budgeting and getting the most from their money.</p>

	<p>Key workers will jointly work with the allocated social worker to ensure that a young person has a personal bank account as part of “general citizenship standard”. Furthermore procedures should be in place to ensure that the young person has their national insurance number in their possession as near to their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday as possible. As part of this process the key worker should ensure that HMRC are aware of the young person’s current address to prevent delay in the process of issuing the national insurance card. Timely responses could prevent a delay in the young person entering education, training or employment.</p>
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## 6.0 Future Provision

### 6.1 Short Breaks Placements for Children with Disabilities

Provision of short breaks for disabled children is currently going through a major review in line with the process around Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC). Cheshire East has asked for expressions of interest from organisations for views on how alternative respite provision might be delivered. It is likely that many of the expressions received will be for non-residential services. As AHDC provides financial support to develop additional services it would not be able to fund the short break residential service as this would not represent additionality.

Therefore a new short breaks residential home is going to be required. This should have five places and should be based in a community which is accessible as possible to the whole of Cheshire East. Many local authorities and voluntary sector providers operate such a resource from accessible bungalows. There needs to be five beds available on a rota basis for children who need over night short break care.

From researching other local authorities and voluntary organisations a suggested staffing structure would be:

1 x Registered Manager
2 x Deputy Manager
16 x Residential Workers
2 x Domestic / Cook
1 x Administrator

The staff teams should work in teams of fours making up four teams to cover 24 / 7 rotas. On a rotational basis one of the teams would cover nights.

Children would be divided into groups of five according to their age, needs, friendships or those attending schools together. There can be thirteen of these groups of children who attend on a rolling rota basis. This allows 65 children to receive short breaks from this home. Currently 24 children use this service each year.

The rolling rota should run from Monday through to Friday and then Friday through to Monday on a cycle and then start again. This ensures that children and young

people get an equal share of the weekends. A standard package for each child would be 28 nights respite each year. However, there would need to be a level of flexibility which would enable some children sharing a 'standard package' and so getting 14 nights each. If the needs assessment required it a child may need a 'double space' and receive 56 nights respite per year.

## **6.2 Future requirements for Residential Care in Cheshire East**

Residential care placements will be required in Cheshire East. In accordance with current thinking and practice every young person who can be placed within a 'family setting' should be placed within one. This allows children to see what 'regular' family functioning should look like and give them the best chance of overcoming earlier difficult experiences. It is well documented that children who fair best according to Every Child Matters outcomes are those placed with stable, long term foster placements. Cheshire East's Children in Care Council have very firm views around the need for stability and for most children the best way to achieve stability is within a foster care setting.

Having said which, there are young people whose needs can best be met within a residential setting. Excellent quality residential care can also assist young people to achieve good outcomes. The current residential care provision is not able to provide this type of care.

Based on the current figures available there needs to be fifteen residential care beds available for children in Cheshire East. There are approximately 175 young people aged 11+ who are looked after in Cheshire East. Fifteen beds would mean that 8.5% of those looked after over the age of 11 would be placed in residential care homes. It may be that if there is a rise in the care population this may need to be reviewed. This would allow for some additional 'specialist' beds to be purchased from out of area placements if required to meet the specific needs of the children. There will be the eight beds in the two new Crewe homes and 3 beds in Wilkinson House.

As between 30% and 50% of children looked after by Cheshire East are from the Macclesfield area there needs to be a children's home in that locality in order to allow children to remain in their home area and maintain their school placements.



Due to the evidence that the quality of care would be higher and the unit cost lower it is more beneficial to tender this provision out to the private and voluntary sector.

The council needs to decide whether it would rather own the property or include that as part of the commissioning process. I would suggest that by owning the building this would be more cost effective in the long term. The property should be made fully accessible and DDA compliant.

If the service was to be commissioned out issues of TUPE would need to be resolved and would influence the costs of the tender as all the remaining staff would TUPE with their existing terms and conditions.

I would advise that if a suitable property could be found that a four bedded home could be developed within the next twelve months.

Having looked into a number of council run and voluntary sector care homes the average staffing for a four bedded children's homes will be as follows:

1 x Registered Manager
1 x Deputy manager
10 x Residential Workers
18.5 hour Administrator
20 Hour Domestic

### 6.3 Emergency placements

Given that 44% of all children who have recently been placed in the emergency provision returned to the care of their parents it could be argued that they should never have come into care at all and rather if an emergency response team of social care staff could be deployed during the crisis this would potentially stop almost 30 children being admitted into residential care.

The staffing of Mottram House is projected to cost approximately £313,555 this year. The staffing complement for that part of Priors Hill is 12 hours of manager's time a week plus; 1FTE Group Leader, 2FTE senior residential workers and 3 FTE residential care workers. This equates to 197 hours of residential staff time each week, which is 10,244 staff hours per annum.

22% of all children placed on the emergency house went to live in foster care. To replace Mottram House emergency foster care beds should be developed.

A service which is currently missing in the residential service in Cheshire East is an assessment function. It is worth considering where Wilkinson House would be able to carry out this function. It would assist in the identification of a child's needs and also to determine the type of placement where those needs would be best met.

## 7.0 Recommendations

- Residential care in Cheshire East needs to be urgently brought up to date. Its institutionalised practices and provision are about 20 years behind where they should be. It is achieving very poor outcomes for the children who reside in this type of 'care'.
- Given the recent history of in-house provision with both Redsands and Priors Hill units being deemed 'inadequate' I would advise that residential provision should be outsourced in Cheshire East. Initially this should be the two homes in Crewe and also the home which will be in Macclesfield. It should be remembered that Ofsted are inspecting against minimum standards and it has been demonstrated that in-house is unable to achieve these. The unit costs would be similar or less than the current cost of in-house provision and the quality would be much greater representing better value for money and better quality of care for the children. One organisation providing all of the residential care provision would bring economies of scale in relation to management costs. Any outsourcing arrangement should be contractually linked to levels of occupancy to ensure good value for money. The tender specification should be strongly linked to outcomes and any organisation making a bid would need to be able to demonstrate that it already provides 'excellence' in children's residential care.
- Priors Hill is not fit for purpose. The emergency bed facility should be closed by the end of November and Alderley should be closed by the end of December. Children currently in this provision need to have their care plans progressed appropriately and if they are to remain in residential care should be moved to the new Crewe homes as an interim measure. The closure of Priors Hill and its replacement was endorsed in principle by the Scrutiny review Panel in 2005. If this timescale was adhered to then a £240k saving could be made before April 2010 although this would be dependent upon staff costs of redeployment or redundancy.
- A new house should be purchased in a residential area of Macclesfield. This should be a four bedded home in order to accommodate the level of need

within the Macclesfield area. I would advise that it would be financially prudent for the house to be purchased by Cheshire East Council and for the provision to be put out to tender for the delivery of the service. This should be an 'ordinary house' in an ordinary area as requested by the children. The cost per annum of such an outsourced provision would be in the region of £560k if the building was owned by Cheshire East. This home needs to be fully accessible.

- As an interim measure in the period between Priors Hill closing and a new home being available children from the Macclesfield area would need to be placed in Crewe and transport to school or college provided. Another solution might be to spot purchase beds from Cheshire West and Chester in Wilkinson House if they remain unused.
- Placements into the new Crewe homes should commence by the end of November.
- One of the new homes in Crewe needs to be made fully accessible and suitable for children who use a wheel chair or whose mobility is compromised.
- A review of the contract with Together Trust needs to take place to adjust the age group for Wilkinson House to children 12-14 years at the point of admission. Children under the age of 12 years need to be placed in a family environment. This may necessitate the development or commissioning of treatment foster care provision or additional resources added in to skill up existing foster carers. Further needs analysis should take place once the contract with Together Trust reaches its conclusion. If such a resource is required in the Sandbach area then this service could also go out to competitive tender.
- Wilkinson House should also be asked to take on an assessment function so as children's needs can be determined to effectively match them in suitable care provision.
- Emergency foster care provision should be developed. There needs to be an option of two beds available. This could be simply a foster carer who is paid a retainer to be available to take emergency admissions should they arise.
- The 'front door' needs to be more effectively managed to avoid large numbers of teenagers entering residential care and then returning to the care of their parents. A small team is needed to work out of hours providing emergency crisis intervention based on a solution focussed intervention model. This should be developed to help address the issue of teenagers entering the care system in emergency situations. Current EDT arrangements are not appropriate to meet the need and stop children needlessly entering the care

system. It may be that some space in the Wilkenson House campus could be made available to house such a team.

- Mother and baby foster placements are needed. There needs to be places for two young people and their babies. Ideally there should be a foster placement in each of the localities to enable the family to remain in their local area.
- A pool of peripatetic residential staff could be developed and trained to improve quality standards and reduce the unnecessary use of agency staff within the residential homes.
- Work needs to take place with the staff teams to reduce the levels of criminalisation of children in the care homes. Perhaps a greater level of understanding of basic principles surrounding attachment issues may help staff find new ways of managing difficulties. A policy change is also required to support this change.
- Langely House needs to be moved out of Priors Hill. This will take some time as a new bungalow would need to be purchased to house the new short breaks home. It would be necessary to continue to operate out of the current building until a new one was fully operational. As the other parts of Priors Hill will close there will be a need to employ security staff in the short term to ensure the safety of the children and staff in Langley House.
- There needs to be an investment in improving the leadership skills in the residential service. There has not been suitable leadership or quality management and in the short term there will need to have a level of improvement in that area.
- Following the appointment to posts for the new homes all staff should be audited against the new residential induction standards. Any shortfall in their training needs should be addressed.
- There needs also to be an investment of time and energy in turning around what appears to be an adverse culture within the residential service.
- Managers within the residential sector need to receive training on budget management and controls and regular reviews put in place to ensure services operate within budget.



# **Guidance and Procedures**

*Children and Families*

*DRAFT*

## **Children's Homes Regulations 2001 - Regulation 33 Visits**

# Glossary of terms

**Legislation** “the Law”

Issued by central government following a process of wider consultation with targeted stakeholders about the proposals (green paper), followed by a white paper detailing proposed legislation for further consultation, and then a bill which is progressed through Parliament to become law (an Act of Parliament).

**Regulations**

Issued by central government, setting out the arrangements to expand on, implement and enact the legislation.

**Standards**

National standards issued by government against which the local authority will be inspected and measured. These should be reflected in the departmental procedures. Standards should be measurable.

**Strategy**

The aim which informs the policy of an organisation. May include service development.

**Policy** “What we have to do”

Principles developed by members of an organisation; should be linked back to legislation/regulation and set out how the local authority will implement legislation and regulation.

**Procedures** “How we do it”

Developed by an organisation to operationalise policy. This should reflect internal recording procedures and relationships between different sections of the department.

**Guidance** “Why we have to do it”

This can be issued by Government or can be a local directive on good practice. Guidance can be very specific or a more general statement of principles.

**Protocol**

This is developed to manage an interface between two areas of policy which may or may not be within the same department or local authority.

**Statement of Purpose**

A document required by the Regulations, which defines the objectives of the fostering service, and covers those issues set out in the Regulations and national minimum standards.

**Delegated authority**

Name of person who is authorised to make key decisions.

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## **1. Requirements of Regulation 33**

### **1.1 Children's Homes Regulations 2001, Regulation 33 Visit by registered provider:**

(See Appendices for excerpts from the Regulations)

Regulation 33 requires for a monthly visit to children's homes and units run by the local authority by a person not employed at the home nor directly responsible for it, and the presentation of a written report to the responsible authority – referred to below as the Visitor. The person undertaking the visit should be properly informed of its purpose and have access to the reports provided for the previous 6 months.

### **1.2 The purpose of Regulation 33 Visits**

The focus of the visits is to ensure that the day-to-day care provided is of a satisfactory standard. This is achieved through a combination of the Visitor's own direct observations, conversations with young people and staff and reading of key records and reports which together provide important insights into the ways in which the home/unit operates on a daily basis and how appropriate care and control is provided.

The visits will also assist in service development by providing a regular independent perspective on the functioning of children's residential provision.

### **1.3 The inspection visit and report**

The inspection visit requires the Visitor to read the daily log and check appropriate records; to check the physical condition of the home/unit; to talk to young people, staff on duty and any visitor who may be present; to report directly to the manager where immediate issues should be dealt with on the visit. (See below for details)

The written report on observations and findings will be provided to the manager of the home/unit, to senior managers of the local authority, to the relevant Member from the Corporate Parenting Group and to CSCI.

## **2. Procedures for visits**

### **2.1 Planning:** Visits will take place in each calendar month. Visits will normally be unannounced and times of day will vary, taking into account when young people will be there. Each visit will require a minimum of 3 hours.



**2.2 Undertaking the visit:** On arrival at the home/unit, the Visitor should show his or her identification card and state the nature of the visit. They should also:

- Ascertain how many young people are present at the home/unit and ask that they be informed of the visit
- Explain how they intend to carry out the visit
- Find out if there is anything happening of which they need to be aware

The Visitor should not look around bedroom areas alone if young people are around and should not enter individual young people's bedrooms without their permission. A young person might be asked to show the Visitor round the building as this can provide both an opportunity for talking privately with the young person and gaining their views about the accommodation.

**2.3 Visits by Members of the Authority:** visits will be made jointly with Members and an independent person to a specific home or unit as part of their corporate parenting responsibilities.

### **3. Records to be checked**

The records provide important information and insight into what has occurred since the last visit and can usefully inform discussions with young people and staff.

**3.1 At each visit:** The records to read are: (Details of the report content is in the Appendices to these Procedures.)

- a) The admissions and discharges record
- b) The Daily Log
- c) Record of child protection concerns
- d) Record of Sanctions
- e) Record of Restraints
- f) Record of Complaints
- g) Significant incidents
- h) Record of Young People's Meetings
- i) Record of Staff Meetings
- j) Log of staff supervision

**3.2 Records to be checked periodically** (likely quarterly but at Visitor's discretion)

- a) Children/young people's file records
- b) Health and Safety records
- c) Fire Regulations
- d) Risk Assessments
- e) Medication administration and stock
- f) Staff training

#### **4. Premises/Furniture and fittings**

The Visitor should look around the building and the garden/grounds on each visit. The report should identify:

- Any damage or outstanding repairs
- Any unsafe equipment that needs replacing or repairing
- Any delays in receiving a response from the relevant services department (the Visitor should ensure that staff have properly reported any outstanding defect before making reference to it in the report)

The report should comment on the general standards of accommodation, the furniture and fittings and the level of homeliness provided. A distinction needs to be drawn between issues that need to be addressed over a longer period or have implications for the capital programme and those that should be resolved more speedily.

#### **5. The Education of Young People Cared for**

The Visitor should discuss with the member of staff on duty the arrangements for the education of each young person of school age and school/education problems encountered.

The report should identify: (using child's initials only)

- Any young person who is not attending school
- The reasons for this
- Any alternative arrangements that have been made.

#### **6. Arrangements for Health Care**

The Visitor should ascertain what the arrangements are for young people to access health and medical care, including G.P. services, dental care, hearing and sight tests as well as advice relating, as appropriate, to sexual health and substance use.

The report should provide an overview of the level of health care provided and identify any unmet needs that exist.

#### **7. Community Relations**

The Visitor should discuss with staff the relationship between the home/unit and the local community including immediate neighbours; links with local community groups (including participation on local committees); and use of local facilities. There should be discussion too of links with local schools and the local police, including contact made with the Police Liaison Officer.

The quarterly report should identify:

- Any incidents that have occurred or complaints that have been received and action taken
- Any activities undertaken in the local community, for example fundraising or voluntary work.

This may overlap with information recorded elsewhere in the report.

## **8. Comments by Young People, Staff Members, Parents and Visitors**

The Visitor should always ensure that there is opportunity for discussion with young people and staff as well as any parents and visitors who may be present; there should also be the opportunity for individuals to raise matters in private.

The report should record comments in such a way that does not identify the individuals concerned and respects their confidentiality.

## **9. General Comments on satisfaction with the visit**

The Visitor must reach a conclusion as to whether or not they were generally satisfied with the visit and findings. These views should be briefly reported to the registered manager (where possible) prior to leaving the home/unit, including any action that is to be taken. The report provides the space for any overall comments or observations that are not covered under the above headings.

## **10. The Reports**

### **a) Monthly reports (see template provided)**

- The Visitor should attempt to convey a flavour of life in the home/unit by all the means above. There is a need to give basic data in most sections of the report, but details of incidents etc. are not usually necessary, unless used illustratively. The **significance** of findings on such matters is important to address. The emphasis should be on an assessment of the findings in each section with positive points as well as those less so. The Visitor will need to bear in mind the need to explore issues raised from records or comments by staff/residents rather than just record them. The emphasis should be on the **impact** on the care of young people.
- Providing evidence of good practice is important e.g how young people treat each other and adults; how they treat their surroundings; evidence of involvement in how home/unit is run; how staff relate to the young people. Much of this will inform the quarterly reports (see below).

- It is acceptable to use information from one visit in a subsequent visit to explore impact on young people e.g. a comment from a young person may lead to a later visit exploring a particular aspect of practice in the home/unit. In such a way a more in-depth perspective can be built up.
- The report should relate what the Visitor thinks of the home's performance.
- Reports will be sent to Managers for comments and checks for accuracy. It is important that any significant concerns should be checked with the Manager for clarification. Where facts are in dispute these should be resolved before the report is finalised. Differences of interpretation may still be reflected in the final Document.

**b) Quarterly Reports (draft)**

In addition to the monthly visit reports, a quarterly report is required. This should contribute to the completions of the annual Head of Service reports under Regulation 34. This gives the opportunity for the Visitor to periodically aggregate findings and follow up emerging themes. In this way individual visits can be used to concentrate on a particular aspect of functioning in more depth (e.g. leisure programmes, health issues) in the knowledge that the quarterly report will serve to pull together findings and comment.

The quarterly report is intended to be a supplement to the more factual monthly reports by drawing impressions and conclusions from them. It gives the opportunity to expand on good practice and areas for improvement and point out trends. This report should have more of an analytical flavour than the monthly reports, which represent more a snapshot, and enable the Visitor to express professional views on the quality of care given within the home. The evidence for such views should be succinctly included.

**Feedback:**

We welcome feedback about our policies and procedures so if you have any comments about this procedure please email to [glynis.williams@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:glynis.williams@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

**Glynis Williams**  
**Operation Manager – Cared for Children Service**  
**September 2009**

## **Appendices:**

### **A. Children's Homes Regulations 2001:**

#### **1. Regulation 33**

##### **PART V**

##### **MANAGEMENT OF HOMES**

##### **Visits by registered provider**

**33. -** (1) Where the registered provider is an individual, but is not in day to day charge of the children's home, he shall visit the home in accordance with this regulation.

- (2) **Where the registered provider is an organisation or a partnership, the home shall be visited in accordance with this regulation by –**
- (a) the responsible individual or one of the partners, as the case may be;
  - (b) another of the directors or other persons responsible for the management of the organisation or partnership; or
  - (c) an employee of the organisation or partnership who is not directly concerned with the conduct of the home.
- (3) Visits under paragraph (1) or (2) shall take place at least once a month and may be unannounced.
- (4) The person carrying out the visit shall –
- (a) interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home;
  - (b) inspect the premises of the children's home, its daily log of events and records of any complaints; and
  - (c) prepare a written report on the conduct of the home.
- (5) The registered provider shall supply a copy of the report required to be made under paragraph (4)(c) to –
- (a) the Commission;
  - (b) the registered manager of the children's home; and
  - (c) in the case of a visit under paragraph (2) -
    - (i) where the registered provider is an organisation, to each of the directors or other persons responsible for the management of the organisation; and
    - (ii) where the registered provider is a partnership, to each of the partners.

## **2. Regulation 34**

### **Review of quality of care**

**34.** - (1) The registered person shall establish and maintain a system for -

(a) monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals; and

(b) improving the quality of care provided in the children's home.

(2) The registered person shall supply to the Commission a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of paragraph (1), and make a copy of the report available on request to children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities.

(3) The system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities.

### **B Details of Records to be checked and the content of Reports**

#### **a) The Admissions and Discharges Record**

To identify admissions and discharges since the last visit.

#### **b) The Daily Log**

The Visitor should check that this record contains entries for the whole of each day and provides an overview of daily life and events in accordance with the requirements of the Recording Standards document. It may be necessary to cross reference with other records, for example a significant incident report, to gain a complete picture.

The report should comment on both the content of the entries, the standard of recording and identify any gaps.

#### **c) Record of child protection concerns:**

The report should include:

- Date concern was noted
- Nature of the concern
- Action taken by the home/unit – including referral on (eg other local authority)
- Outcome

#### **d) Record of Sanctions**

The Visitor should ensure that the record conforms to the requirements of regulations, Department of Health guidance on permissible forms of control and the DCC policy guidance on positive care and control. It may be necessary to cross reference with serious incident reports or speak with individual young people.

The report should identify:

- The number of entries in the record
- The number of young people concerned
- The types of sanctions used and the reason for their use
- Any occasion upon which a young person has been reported to the police in response to any alleged criminal act perpetrated at the home/unit
- Any apparent excessive or unduly low use of formal sanctions (which may suggest that the requirements are not being followed) or repeated use of sanctions in respect of individual young people or by individual staff members

The report should also state whether or not the use of formal sanctions by staff appears to be both lawful and appropriate.

**Any apparent unlawful use of sanctions must be immediately brought to the attention of the external line manager**

#### **e) Record of Restraints**

**The Visitor should ensure that the record conforms to the requirements of regulations and guidance on positive care and control. Any use of restraint must also be recorded in detail on a serious incident report form.**

The report should identify:

- The number of entries in the record
- Any matter that has been referred for investigation under the complaints or child protection procedures or to the police and the outcome of any such investigation (if known)
- Any apparent excessive use of restraint or repeated use in respect of individual young people or by individual staff members.

It should also state whether or not the use of restraint by staff appears to be both lawful and appropriate.

**Any apparent unlawful use of restraint must be immediately brought to the attention of the external line manager.**

#### **f) Record of Complaints**

The Visitor should ensure that the record conforms to the requirements of the Recording Standards document and contains an entry for any complaint made regarding the conduct of staff or young people. It may be necessary to cross reference with serious incident reports or other records or speak with individual young people.

The report should identify:

- the number of entries in the record
- the nature of the complaints
- the number of young people identified
- the appropriateness of action taken in response and whether or not they have been satisfactorily resolved (where known)

The report should also comment as to whether young people appear to be aware of the complaints procedure and are able to exercise their rights to use the procedure.

**g) Significant incidents**

The Visitor should read all the serious incident reports to satisfy him or herself that they have been handled in accordance with the requirements of any procedures and that full information has been recorded to inform any investigation that might be required.

The report should identify:

- The number of reports
- The nature of the incidents (comment is required on incidents **not** covered in any of the proceeding sections)
- The appropriateness of action taken in response and whether or not they have been satisfactorily resolved (where known)

**h) Record of Young People's Meetings**

The Visitor should read the minutes of meetings, held with the young people, which are intended to promote their active participation in day to day life at the home/unit. The frequency of meetings may vary between homes/units but should be a regular feature and an important forum for dialogue between staff and young people.

The report should comment on the effectiveness of this forum and identify:

- How frequently meetings are held
- The level of attendance
- The range of issues covered

**i) Record of Staff Meetings**

The Visitor should read the minutes of staff meetings which are intended to promote communication, home/unit policy formulation and planning of activities etc. The frequency of meetings may vary between homes/units but should be held not less than monthly. The report should comment on the effectiveness of this forum and identify:

- How frequently meetings are held
- The level of attendance
- The range of issues covered

**j) Log of staff supervision**

The Visitor should check that all staff receive supervision regularly and that an explanation is provided if supervision has not been given on a regular basis. (It is not part of the Visitor's role to read the supervision notes.)



## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

### **REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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**Date of Meeting: 7 September 2010**

**Report of: Lorraine Butcher, Director of Children's Services**

**Subject/Title: Macclesfield High School and Macclesfield School Review**

**Portfolio Holder: Cllr Hilda Gaddum**

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#### **1.0 Report Summary**

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the process and a summary of the present position and preliminary findings at the mid point of the informal consultation process which ends on 8 October. The panel will also receive a short presentation delivered by Officers reflecting the latest detail.

#### **2.0 Decision Requested**

- 2.1 No decisions are required by the Scrutiny Committee. Contribution to the consultation is invited from the Committee.

#### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Committee is an integral part of the informal consultation and whilst there is no formal recommendation, the observations and advice of the Committee are an essential part of the validation of the process.

#### **4.0 Wards Affected**

- 4.1 All Macclesfield Wards

#### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 Cllr Harold Davenport  
Cllr Matthew Davies  
Cllr Diana Thompson  
Cllr Ainsley Arnold  
Cllr John Goddard  
Cllr John Narraway,  
Cllr Marc Asquith  
Cllr Hilda Gaddum  
Cllr Lesley Smetham

Cllr Stephen Broadhurst  
Cllr David Neilson  
Cllr Christine Tomlinson  
Cllr Darryl Beckford  
Cllr Sandy Bentley  
Cllr Martin Hardy  
Cllr Paul Findlow  
Cllr Thelma Jackson  
Cllr Bill Livesley  
Cllr Darryl Beckford

**6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change  
- Health**

- 6.1 The Macclesfield School Review will have a range of policy implications around pupil place planning, utilisation of Assets and school transport. These will be more fully described if and when the process of formal consultation is conducted.

**7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

- 7.1 There are no immediate financial implications. The evaluation of each of the proposals will require a summary commentary of both the Capital and Revenue implications. A summary description will be provided in a future decision paper in October and the detailed evaluation will be completed by December 2010 if and when a formal consultation is undertaken.

**8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

- 8.1 There are no immediate legal implications. The evaluation of each of the proposals will require a summary commentary of legal implications. A summary description will be provided in a future decision paper in October and the detailed evaluation will be completed by December 2010 if and when a formal consultation is undertaken.

**9.0 Risk Management**

- 9.1 There are two areas of risk. The first is around the technical and procedural. The impact of not conducting the process correctly is high and the likelihood is low. This is therefore a moderate risk.
- 9.2 The second area of risk is directly associated with each proposal. As part of the preliminary evaluation of each of these, a risk and issues evaluation will be carried out against the criteria.

**10.0 Background and Options**

- 10.1 Cllr Hilda Gaddum, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, considered a proposal on June 24 to begin a formal consultation on plans to close Macclesfield High and for Tytherington High to expand onto the site and run it

as a single split-campus school. At this meeting Cllr Gaddum decided to launch an informal consultation on a wider range of proposals ending 8 October 2010.

- 10.2 Simultaneously, the Local Authority agreed to commence a review of admission arrangements in Macclesfield. This decision was endorsed at a meeting of the Admissions Forum 21 July 2010.
- 10.3 Four, very well attended (386 people) informal consultation events took place at the Tytherington and Macclesfield High Schools in July and two further 'drop in' type events for the wider Macclesfield stakeholders are planned to take place at the Macclesfield Town Hall and Football ground on 15 and 16 September.
- 10.4 A high volume of comments and new proposals have already been received. Alternative options received have been collated alongside the Council's original list of proposals (attached as **Appendix 1**).
- 10.5 Feedback received so far has been categorised under a number of main headings (**Appendix 2**). This will be more fully developed into a commentary once informal consultation is complete.
- 10.6 The Council's website contains a number of informative documents, including the informal consultation document (Appendix 3) and a Frequently Asked Questions sheet. The documents explain the range of options to enable all stakeholders to give their views and feedback. This will be enhanced in early September with a number of further documents providing more detail as the process develops.
- 10.7 In order to: add sufficient challenge and rigour, help with the wider consultation, develop the options appraisal and provide technical support, some modest capacity from external consultants is being sought. The details of this are not available at the time of writing but this will be required during September 2010.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

- 10.8 The review of Macclesfield schools has been triggered as a result of a number of factors, including falling pupil numbers and mixed academic performance and future viability. Given the number and range of options and in order to best utilise limited resources and focus effort, an evaluation framework is being developed. This is built around a number of 'Fundamental Principles' and the current task is to finalise and prioritise these. A preliminary evaluation will be conducted in September by an internal panel led by the Executive member. Each proposal will be tested against these fundamental Criteria and it is expected that a number of proposals will be eliminated on this basis..
- 10.9 The evaluation criteria and process will be published in early September on the Council's website.

## **11.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues**

- 11.1 A decision on whether to proceed to formal consultation will be taken in October once informal consultation has concluded. Any formal consultation would be concluded by end of December 2010. A decision on the outcome(s) would be made in January 2011. The year one issues and implications would be described at this stage.

## **12.0 Access to Information**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Rob Hyde

Designation: Organisation and Capital Strategy Manager

Tel No: 01606 271821

Email: [rob.hyde@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:rob.hyde@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

## **Macclesfield Town Reorganisation - Options for Change**

### **Part One - Cheshire East Council Options for Change**

- A. Closure of Macclesfield High School and Expansion of Tytherington High School.
- B. To establish a Macclesfield Academy involving Macclesfield High School and another local high school.
- C. No change
- D. The establishment of a single Trust working across the high schools in Macclesfield.
- E. Creation of a 3-19 all-through school, integrating a local primary school on the Macclesfield High School site.
- F. Re-launch of Macclesfield High School as a Specialist Vocational/‘Technical’ School
- G. Closure of Macclesfield High School and redistribution of pupils across the remaining secondary schools.
- H. Use of Macclesfield High School site for Post 16 provision for the whole town
- I. Current Macclesfield High schools each lose one form entry to Macclesfield High School.
- J. Your views

### **Part Two – Responses to Consultation (to date) – Further Options for Consideration**

#### **Option 1.**

The expansion of Tytherington High School and closure of Macclesfield High School. Tytherington High School to comprise:

- Tytherington High School North (Manchester Road) and
- Tytherington High School South (Park Lane).

Each site teaches years 7 to 11 to those children in their catchment areas. (Tytherington High School South pupils will not attend the north site and visa versa).

The 6th form college would only exist on Tytherington High School South site. Taking away 6th form students from the Tytherington High School North site would increase the total number of pupils at the Tytherington High School South site.

#### **Option 2.**

Tytherington High School and Macclesfield High School form a hard federation with one governing body having full financial control of sites, benefiting from economies of shared resources, shared specialist facilities, shared teaching staff.

Positive marketing and public relations of Macclesfield High School

Separate shared sixth form between Tytherington High School and Macclesfield High School, to be located at LZ6.  
Subject to securing capital investment on Tytherington High School site for its 7 - 11 students.

**Option 3.**

Macclesfield High School closure.

Part/Full Macclesfield High School site to be used for Cheshire East Special Educational Needs  
Provision for Secondary SEN and Autistic Spectrum Condition.

Additional surplus space (capacity) could also be allocated for the use of Park Lane Special School.

Students of the High School should be divided between the 3 remaining high schools i.e. Tytherington High School, Fallibroome High School and All Hallows Catholic College, as with numbers falling in birth rate this could be managed in two years time, with minimal disruption.

(In addition: Cease Admissions to Macclesfield High School from 2011 to phase in with Y8&9 pupils to be transferred to alternative schools early to avoid disruption to GCSE course).

If Tytherington High School expands to 2 sites (as per Option A), only part site would be used for Special Education Needs with access to LZ, vocational opportunities and mainstream classes

**Option 4.**

Put a cap on entry into Macclesfield High School (i.e. propose closure: phasing out all existing year groups) and run the school from Tytherington High School to ensure access to curriculum. Allow the other three High Schools to increase their intake by one form, empty Macclesfield High School building to be used for Special Education Need provision. If Tytherington High School needs capital investment on the site then they should receive it regardless.

**Option 5.**

Consider a public/private partnership federation (possibly with King's school) using the Tytherington High School campus, transferring pupils from Macclesfield High School to Tytherington High School/Kings.

**Option 6.**

A single 6th form located on the LZ6 campus but in an effort to offer greater flexibility at post 16 education, the college undertakes a feasibility study to the opening of a Construction/Tradesmen type training college offering City &

Guilds level training and qualification in Brick laying, Electrical, Carpentry/Joiners, Painting and Decorating, Plumbers etc making it a Cheshire centre of excellence for the building trade and associated companies.

**Option 7.**

Macclesfield College acquires Macclesfield High School surplus accommodation for greater provision of Technology & Science Specialism

**Option 8.**

Integration of the town's sixth forms together on one site.

**Option 9.**

Macclesfield High School problems to be fixed at Macclesfield High School. Mothball redundant classrooms; reduce staffing numbers to suit the expected pupil intake.

**Option 10.**

Make Macclesfield High School attractive with new management and a new core focus.

**Option 11.**

Appoint a 'Super-Head'. Financial 'incentives and rewards' for a successful head from a neighbouring high school. They will adopt the role of 'super head' to set up and guide a new leader/management team to run the schools to raise their standards.

**Option 12.**

Use the state of the art purpose built premises of Macclesfield High School as the main school in Macclesfield to accept new form entries from the other schools.

**Option 13.**

Close Tytherington High School and with high quality leadership make Macclesfield High School the best school in the Cheshire East.

**Option 14.**

Demolish Tytherington High School and send pupils to Poynton High School and to Macclesfield High School.

**Option 15.**

Close Macclesfield High School and expand Fallibroome High School and All Hallows Catholic College.

**Option 16.**

Create a "super" primary school out of the Macclesfield High School.

**Option 17.**

A school specialising in Science and Technology would be an asset to Macclesfield - Ground breaking educational (vocational diploma) course at the new MACCLESFIELD TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL.

**Option 18.**

Close Macclesfield High School. Create a Free school under group/parent leadership on the Macclesfield High School site.



## Feedback Headings from consultation events in July 2010

- Collective and individual school admissions policies
- Transport implications and pupil movements
- Split site distances and operational implications
- School reputations
- Previous decisions making
- Local Authority powers
- Transitional support available
- Extending consultation suggestions and processes
- Academy Status implications
- Role of the press
- Special Educational Needs provision
- Primary schools impact
- Individual schools academic performance
- Communication improvements
- Implications around choice
- Data sets used
- Yr 6 School preferences
- Levels of disruption

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# Macclesfield Town Secondary School Provision

## “Options for Change”

Informal Consultation  
24 June - 8 October 2010

**Cheshire East Council  
Children & Families Services  
School Organisation and Capital Strategy  
Delamere House, (EC)  
Delamere Street,  
Crewe,  
Cheshire  
CW1 2LL**

**Have your say on changes to secondary school provision in Macclesfield Town.****Cabinet Member Meeting of 24 June**

As you may be aware, the Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Families Services met on 24 June to consider a request for permission to proceed with formal consultation on proposed changes to secondary school provision in Macclesfield. For some time now, discussions have been ongoing with Cheshire East officers, school governors and headteachers in Macclesfield aimed at strengthening local secondary provision and to promote fair access to educational opportunity for all young people in the area whilst addressing the issue of a continued decline in pupil numbers resulting in surplus places in some of our schools. At this stage, a number of options were explored resulting in the recommended option of consultation on the closure of Macclesfield High School at the end of August 2011 and expansion of Tytherington High School utilising both school sites with effect from September 2011.

At the meeting of 24 June it was agreed that a decision to commence formal consultation should be deferred to allow more detailed consideration of all options, including any additional options that may emerge through this process. Informal consultation will therefore be ongoing until 8 October 2010 and a further meeting will be arranged for November for the Council's Cabinet Member to agree the next steps, which may include formal consultation on revised options. Full details about the decision of the 24 June are available on the Council's website at [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools).

**About this consultation document:**

This consultation document is designed to ensure that all interested parties are made aware of the full range of options that have been considered during the early stages of this process and to provide you with information on how you can feedback your views to the Council as part of this agreed informal consultation process. Additionally, any further options proposed for consideration through this process will be considered.

All feedback will be collated and presented in a report to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Families Services with an analysis of the responses received and recommendations on the next steps, which may include permission to proceed with formal consultation on specific options.

We therefore urge you to consider the information presented in this document and to return your comments and views to this Council by completing the feedback form provided.

**Background:**

There are four secondary schools in Macclesfield, each providing education aged 11 to 18. These are:

1. Macclesfield High (formed in 2007 from the relocation of Henbury High School onto the Macclesfield Learning Zone site);
2. Fallibroome High
3. All Hallows Catholic College
4. Tytherington High

The establishment of Macclesfield High on the Learning Zone was a joint venture with Macclesfield College and Park Lane Special schools and was established with £15,948,507 investment. The Sixth Form provision on the Macclesfield High School site is a shared provision with Macclesfield College.

The total number of places available in the town's four high schools, including all sixth form provision, is 4,910. The number of pupils attending these high schools has fallen over the past years from 5,000 pupils in 2002 to 4,570 in May 2010 (i.e. using the latest data) and a further fall is projected at 4,174 pupils by September 2016. This indicates a continued decline in the number of pupils on roll at these four high schools with an overall reduction over this period projected at 16.5% less pupils, with this resulting in 34% surplus places in Macclesfield High School based on the Local Authority's 'secondary forecast formula'.

**Secondary Forecast Formula**

The year 7 secondary school intake figures are arrived at by studying which primary school the pupils came from in the previous September. Using this information we then calculate percentage 'feeder school transfer rates' for each of the primary schools, based on an average rate transferring from that primary school to secondary school over the last three years. We do not calculate a transfer rate between the primary and secondary school if only one pupil transferred from the primary school last September.

These percentage 'feeder school transfer rates' are then applied to the number of pupils actually on roll at the primary schools in January to generate the future number of pupils which it is expected will feed from each of these primary schools into the secondary schools.

As well as using the primary school feeder transfer rates, we also include an estimate of the number of pupils admitted to secondary schools from non-Cheshire East primary schools based on past data.

The projected estimates for numbers on roll in future years are these 'feeder school transfer rates' rolled forward, i.e. Year 7 in 2010 becomes Year 8 in 2011, Year 9 in 2012 etc.

Please note that:

1. Primary school transfer feeder rates have been updated to include data collated in May 2010, which is the most up to date information available at the time this was produced.
2. The Macclesfield High School net capacity has been calculated to include capacity for 300 pupils as the Learning Zone 6 sixth form centre is shared with the college.

Based on the May 2010 pupil count projections indicate that there will be a significant increase in surplus school places in the Macclesfield area, with most being at Macclesfield High School. As result of this projected increase in surplus places, it is recognised that there is a need to consider options for change to secondary school provision in the town in order to ensure sustainability for the foreseeable future.

The number of surplus places is projected to increase to 919 across the town by 2016 resulting in a 22% surplus overall.

Macclesfield High School is expected to have the largest proportion of the surplus places by this date, which is projected to be 407 by 2016 resulting in a 34% surplus. This figure needs to be considered alongside the intakes to the other three high schools, with surplus places projected at All Hallows Catholic College at 22% by 2016; Fallibroome High School at 0%; and 19% at Tytherington High School. All projected figures are based on the secondary forecast formula. However, in view of the established pattern of parental preference in the town, it is anticipated that surplus places in three of the high schools will be lower than the formula predicts as a result of more parents and carers securing places for their children in accordance with preferences made through the coordinated admission scheme for admission into year 7, i.e. the normal point of entry to the school. Projections indicate that, if this pattern continues to September 2016, the number of surplus places in Macclesfield High School could reach as high as 56%.

### **Academic Standards**

The three year trend in the academic standards at Macclesfield High School, following its creation as a new secondary school in September 2007, has been downward with current 5+ A\*- C including English and Maths just above the 30% national baseline.

The Local Authority, with governor support, decided to include the school within the National Challenge programme in September 2009 in response to the deterioration in standards and a clear need to establish robust monitoring arrangements. The inclusion of any school within the National Challenge programme requires the LA to seriously consider 'structural solutions' where there is the possibility of standards not improving. Macclesfield High was inspected in February 2010, which resulted in a 'Notice to Improve' because the school was judged to need significant improvement in attainment, the progress made by students and the quality of learning and attendance.

**‘Options for Change’**

The following presents a summary of the current options that you are invited to consider and feedback your views on as part of this informal consultation process. Other options that emerge during consultation will also be collated for consideration.

**Option A: Closure of Macclesfield High School and Expansion of Tytherington High School**

This option would require the closure of Macclesfield High School on 31 August 2011 and the expansion of Tytherington High School with effect from 1 September 2011 with an increase in the number admitted into Year 7 from 210 to 300 pupils.

This option includes the continued use of both school sites, with pupils aged 11-14 being taught on the Tytherington High School site and 14-19 education delivered on the Macclesfield High School/Learning Zone 6 site.

The concept of a split site school organised in this way offers the ability to create increased flexibility at Key Stage 3.

Choosing to base the 14-19 provision on the Macclesfield High School Site would provide a unique and new high quality resource for an expanded Tytherington High School, offering opportunities in terms of Key Stage 4 and Post 16 curriculum entitlement.

**Option B: To establish a Macclesfield Academy involving Macclesfield High School and another local high school.**

This option would address the overall need to reduce the surplus capacity in the town through a reduction in the number of schools from 4 to 3.

This option has the potential to provide a new approach to education utilising the academy ethos to learning. This would maintain secondary provision on the Learning Zone site.

This option would require the closure of two high schools and would provide an opportunity to utilise the Macclesfield High School site or a combination of two sites creating a split site campus.

This would require approval by the Secretary of State.

**Option C: No change**

This option would not address the overall need to reduce the surplus capacity in the town through a reduction in the number of schools from 4 to 3 resulting in an inefficient use of resources across the town.

This option would not effectively deal with the ‘Notice to Improve’ regarding Macclesfield High School.

A declining budget would not be able to sustain a high quality curriculum and the school's sixth form offer would become significantly reduced.

**Option D: The establishment of a single Trust working across the high schools in Macclesfield.**

This option could include the closure of Macclesfield High School to address the surplus places issue.

It would require the schools involved to agree to be part of a single trust which provides collective responsibility for all secondary provision in Macclesfield town but retains independence for each of the remaining schools.

This proposal could mean that the Governance arrangements of the trust would be better placed to take a "whole town view" of the provision and pattern of secondary education.

The proposal would require new admissions arrangements to cater for the schools involved in the Trust.

**Option E: Creation of a 3-19 all-through school, integrating a local primary school on the Macclesfield High School site.**

This option would address the need to reduce surplus capacity in the short term with surplus accommodation being utilised through the integration of a primary school to create an all-through 3-19 school on the same site. However, in order for this to be sustained and to minimise the risk of a secondary school with an intake of less than four forms of entry in the future, the current intake numbers would need to be maintained.

This option does have the potential to add value to the concept of the Learning Zone.

It would require significant capital investment to enable this option to be viable.

**Option F: Re-launch of Macclesfield High School as a Specialist Vocational/'Technical' School**

University Technical Colleges are a new concept in education designed to provide 14-19 year olds with the opportunity to take technically orientated courses usually focussed around two broad areas of study.

This option would see the establishment of a range of disciplines and a centre of excellence *specialist* excellence for the benefit of Macclesfield and the wider area. It would involve the establishment of a new leadership team and a renewed image for Macclesfield High School to take the school forward and promote it within the local community.



This option has the potential to offer additional vocational options and attract additional sponsors to the Learning Zone.

**Option G: Closure of Macclesfield High School and redistribution of pupils across the remaining secondary schools.**

This initially solves the issue of surplus places in the town. There would need to be revised admission arrangements across the town leading to a more equitable distribution of pupils across the remaining high schools.

The lack of clear ownership of revised provision on Macclesfield High School site has the potential to impact on quality provision across Learning Zone.

The redistribution of pupils across the remaining high schools creates capacity and accommodation issues which would require significant capital investment to address.

This option would require a review of the partnership arrangements between Park Lane School and the Macclesfield College.

**Option H: Use of Macclesfield High School site for Post 16 provision for the whole town.**

This option would see the creation of a Key Stage 4 and Post 16 collaboration or federation across all high schools in the town, which would provide a an opportunity to consider new qualifications for all learners.

It would require the development and location of specialist Key Stage 4 and Post 16 resources on a single site. Such a development would require greater collaboration between Macclesfield schools at Key Stage 4 and Post 16.

This option would increase vocational opportunities at sixth form level and could address issues relating to the Raising of the Participation Age.

This option would result in all Macclesfield schools losing their independence for post 16 provision. The budgetary implications of sustaining such a provision would have an impact on all the high schools. There would need to be clarity around the management and governance arrangements.

**Option I: Current Macclesfield high schools each lose one form entry to Macclesfield High School.**

This option would require a reduction in the capacity at the other three high schools and for the relevant admission authorities to agree new admissions arrangements to include a reduction in the existing published admission numbers (PANS), which determine the number of pupils that will be admitted into year 7, i.e. the normal point of entry to the school.

In order for the local authority to influence changes to admission arrangements in the area, it would need to challenge arrangements

determined by governing bodies of schools that are their own admission authority and therefore such a change cannot be guaranteed. Bringing about change to the established pattern of parental preference in the town would involve a long term vision and could result in a high percentage of parental dissatisfaction in interim years.

### **Option J: Your views**

In addition to your feedback on the options listed in this document, we are also inviting you to contribute any alternative options that you feel would address the current issues around secondary school provision in Macclesfield town.

### **Now have your say....**

Please consider the information presented in this document and return your comments and views to this Council by completing the feedback form provided.

Informal consultation will end on **8 October 2010**. Any feedback received prior to the decision of 24 June will be included in the decision report presented to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Families Services in November. Please note: Any feedback received after 8 October 2010 may not be included in the decision report.

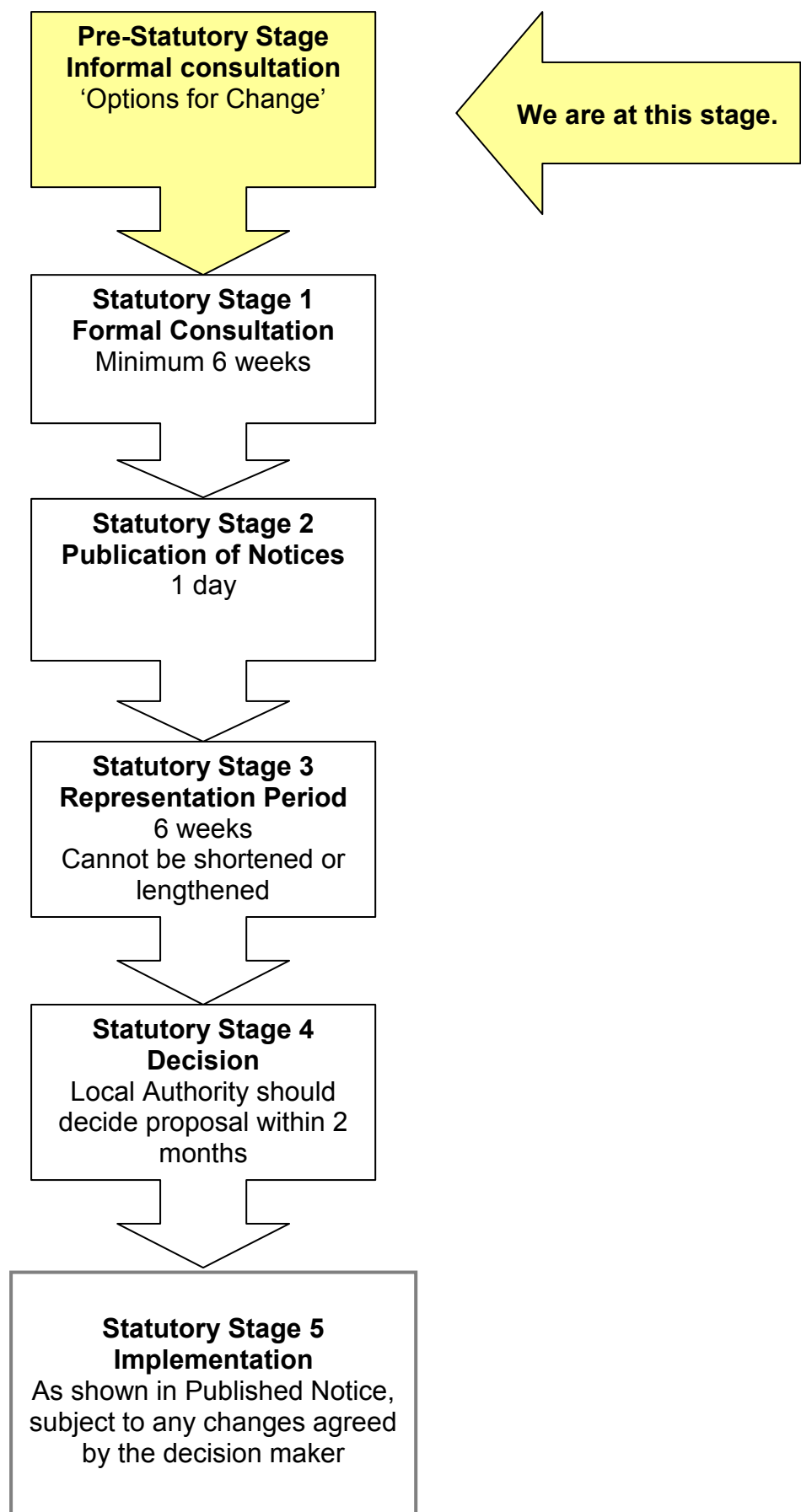
**Completed forms should be returned to the Council at the address provided on the form. Alternatively, you may prefer to return your comments by:**

- e-mail to [SOCS@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:SOCS@cheshireeast.gov.uk);
- telephone on 0300 123 5012;
- letter to School Organisation and Capital Strategy at the address on the front page of the document.
- fax to 01270 686491

### **Consultation Events**

There are two public informal consultation 'drop in' events arranged for September, which are open to anyone interested in the proposed reorganisation of secondary school provision in Macclesfield.

All interested parties will be able to meet with officers from the Local Authority who will record your comments on the aforementioned options and to respond to any questions that you may have. Further information on these events will shortly be published on our website at **[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools)**.

**Overview of the Process for Agreeing School Organisation Changes**

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## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

### **REPORT TO: Children & Families Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 7 September 2010

**Report of:** Lorraine Butcher, Director of Children's Services

**Subject/Title:** Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements within Local Authority Children's Services

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Hilda Gaddum

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#### **1.0 Report Summary**

- 1.1 Cheshire East Council Children's Services were inspected on the 20 and 21 July 2010 by OFSTED under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This report conveys the outcome of that inspection. The findings of the report were published on the 18 August 2010. An action plan detailing actions to address the areas for development identified from the inspection is currently being compiled.

#### **2.0 Decision Requested**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and at a future date receive regular updates on progress being made to address the areas for development identified.

#### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 To ensure effective scrutiny of the ongoing improvement in the arrangements for effectively safeguarding children and young people in Cheshire East.

#### **4.0 Wards Affected**

- 4.1 All

#### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 All

#### **6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health**

- 6.1 Effective safeguarding of children and young people contributes to their emotional health and well-being.

**7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

7.1 Not applicable

**8.0 Financial Implications 2010/11 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

8.1 Actions being taken to address improvements in safeguarding arrangements particularly in the assessment, contact and referral procedures are being contained within the budget agreed for the Service by the Council.

**9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

9.1 None

**10.0 Risk Management**

10.1 Establishing effective arrangements for contact, referral and assessment is at the heart of steps taken to safeguard children and mitigate risks.

**11.0 Background and Options**

11.1 In July 2010 the Local Authority was inspected by OFSTED under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, of its contact, referral and assessment arrangements.

11.2 The purpose of the annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within local authorities is to assess the effectiveness of front-line practice in managing potential risks to children and young people and to minimise the incidence of abuse and neglect.

11.3 The outcomes of the inspection can inform the scheduling of future inspections, in particular the full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children.

11.4 Attached as an Appendix is the letter confirming the findings of the inspection conducted in July. Critically no Priority Actions were identified. These are areas where there are significant concerns identified by the inspectors that children and young people are not being kept safe.

11.5 Detailed in the letter are areas identified as satisfactory practice and areas for development. Steps are being taken to revise the Improvement Plan currently in place to address the areas identified.

**12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues**

12.1 Shortcomings in safeguarding arrangements were identified by Cheshire East Council shortly after becoming a new unitary council in April 2009. The

Unannounced Inspection while identifying areas for development has provided a useful external perspective on progress to date and areas for further improvement. The Service is keen to maintain its momentum for securing further improvements.

### **13.0 Access to Information**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Lorraine Butcher

Designation: Director of Children's Services

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18 August 2010

Mrs Lorraine Butcher  
Head of Service for Children and Families  
Cheshire East Council  
Westfields  
Middlewich Road  
Sandbach  
CW11 1HZ

Dear Mrs Butcher

**Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within Cheshire East Council children's services**

This letter summarises the findings of the recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within local authority children's services in Cheshire East Council which was conducted on 20 and 21 July 2010. The inspection was carried out under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will contribute to the annual review of the performance of the authority's children's services, for which Ofsted will award a rating later in the year. I would like to thank all of the staff we met for their assistance in undertaking this inspection.

The inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on minimising any child abuse and neglect. Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including: electronic case records; supervision files and notes; observation of social workers and senior practitioners undertaking referral and assessment duties; and other information provided by staff and managers. Inspectors also spoke to a range of staff including managers, social workers, other practitioners and administrative staff. During the inspection 56 children's files and 18 staff supervision files were seen.

The inspection identified areas of satisfactory practice, with some areas for development.

From the evidence gathered, the following features of the service were identified:

**Satisfactory practice**

- All child protection enquiries are undertaken by experienced and qualified social workers and in the cases seen by inspectors appropriate actions were identified to ensure that children are protected.
- Management oversight ensures that timely decision-making and prompt action occur to allocate work, to undertake initial assessments or to divert or close



referrals appropriately.

- Managers monitor the timeliness of initial assessments effectively and ensure that risks to children are considered where there are delays.
- The quality of initial assessments is adequate and includes attention to risk and protective factors; where children require further assessment this is recognised.
- Safeguarding and child protection thresholds are set at an appropriate and consistent level. Referrals seen from partner agencies are appropriate and contain relevant and sufficient detail.
- The recent establishment of the duty and initial assessment team has resulted in a reduction in social workers' caseloads in the children in need/child protection teams, which are now at a manageable level.
- Clear guidance for staff supports effective case transfers between the initial assessment team and the children in need and child protection teams.
- Child protection strategy meetings are held in a timely way and in the majority of cases relevant agencies attend in line with statutory requirements.
- Children and young people are interviewed alone where appropriate and are routinely involved in their assessments. Children and their families are consistently informed about the outcome of their assessment.
- Children's identity and their cultural and linguistic needs are assessed satisfactorily and there is effective use of translation and interpreter services.
- Social workers receive regular supervision and inspectors saw some examples of challenging and reflective discussions.
- There is a good range of training and development opportunities and staff expressed positive views about their access to, and the quality of, recent training.

### **Areas for development**

- Timeliness in completing initial and core assessments varies and in some cases results in delays in meeting children's needs.
- The management oversight of core assessments is inconsistent and so does not always ensure their timeliness or that risks to children are sufficiently monitored when there are delays.
- The quality of core assessments is not consistent. Although some are satisfactory, others are too brief and lack analysis of risk or protective factors. Inadequate assessments are being seen and signed off without challenge by

first line managers, which is unsatisfactory.

- Although no children were found to be at risk, the quality of child protection enquiries is variable and some were inadequate. Inspectors found cases where not all of the factors which had led to the referral had been sufficiently addressed and potential risks to children had not been adequately assessed. The quality of the recording of these enquiries also varied.
- The quality of child protection strategy meeting minutes is inconsistent. In some cases, inspectors saw brief and superficial records which lacked sufficiently detailed or clear plans about how the child protection enquiries would be carried out. Similarly, they lacked necessary information about how criminal investigations would proceed.
- The council's electronic system does not deliver sufficient management information or support managers at all levels in the effective management of performance. The impact of this is recognised by the council and funds have been secured to purchase a new system.
- Although policies to quality assure and audit social work practice have been developed recently, the inspection did not find evidence of effective implementation or impact. Consequently, strengths and areas for development are not systematically identified and analysed by managers, or reported to Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Board to drive improvement.

Any areas for development identified above will be specifically considered in any future inspection of services to safeguard children within your area.

Yours sincerely

**Judith Nelson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

Copy: Erica Wenzel, Chief Executive, Cheshire East Council  
David Mellor, Chair of Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Board  
Hilda Gaddum, Lead Member for Children's Services, Cheshire East Council  
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education

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