

Response to Urgent Actions 1 & 2 of National Review – Children with disabilities and complex health needs placed in residential settings

Introduction

The Child Safeguarding Practice and Review Panel is undertaking a review into the safety of children with disabilities placed in specialist residential settings. The [Phase 1 Report](#) of this national review; *seeks to make sense of how and why a significant number of children with disabilities and complex needs came to suffer very serious abuse and neglect whilst living in three privately provided residential settings in the Doncaster area. The report brings into sharp relief how the voices and experiences of this group of children are too often marginalised, misrecognised, and hidden from public sight.*

All Local Authorities have been contacted by the Panel with two urgent actions for additional assurance about the safety and well-being of children living in similar types of placements.

1. Local Authorities to undertake 'Quality and Safety Reviews' for all children with complex needs and disabilities placed in residential specialist Schools registered as children's homes by 23/11/2022. In response.
2. Host Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO) for such specialist placements should review complaints and concerns for the last three years and ensure placing Local Authorities are updated of any outstanding enquiries regarding the homes.

Review Process

Quality and Safety Reviews were completed for children who met the criteria as set out by the Panel. In addition we completed quality and safety reviews for children with a disability and/or and Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) placed in other residential settings.

The Panel set out areas which needed to be fully explored and addressed as below:

- *Children's communication plans are in place, updated and there is evidence of how they are used.*
- *Children have positive behaviour plans in place, and staff are trained and supported to use them.*

- *Children have accurate, up to date medication records and medications are securely stored and that there is appropriate use of medication (e.g., consider use of Pro Re Nata (PRN) medication).*
- *Children's physical and mental health needs are met and understood.*
- *Children are attending school and have clear progress targets.*
- *Children are supported to have the maximum contact with those who care about them, including parents/carers and siblings.*

Reviewers will need to ensure they hear the voice of the child and know what their day-to-day experience of care is like by:

- *Using the methodology of the communication plan to obtain the maximum opportunity of hearing directly about the child's experience, (this must include seeing the child face to face).*
- *Talking directly to families about the child and about how they experience the child's placement.*
- *Talking to key professionals in the child's life and ask about their experience of placement.*
- *Ensuring the child is seen in both home and school (where the child returns home).*

Reviewers will need to ensure that the child is receiving a safe, quality placement by:

- *Checking if any safeguarding issues have been raised and, if so, that these have been followed up appropriately. This will include looking at all notifications in the last 12 months and all physical intervention records and if necessary, ensure appropriate follow up is in place.*
- *Assuring themselves that liberty protection safeguards are in place where needed.*
- *Looking at staffing records to ensure children have the ratios agreed by the contract.*
- *Assuring themselves that all outstanding actions from Annual Reviews have been completed.*

All of the above actions were completed, reports completed for each child identified, and no current serious concerns or child protection matters were identified.

The review process began with scoping and confirming our cohort of children with complex needs and disabilities placed in residential specialist Schools registered as children's homes.

The Quality and Safety Reviews were led by Thurrock's Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) with support from key partners in line with the Panel's guidance. This provided independent completion of the reviews by skilled officers who had a clear escalation route. Where possible the Quality and Safety Reviews were completed as part of the CLA review process but where this was not possible the IRO took additional steps to complete the review outside of this process. Parents and providers were written to in preparation for each of the reviews

As part of the review feedback was sought from:

- The child
- The child's Parents
- The child's Social Worker
- SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities)
- Health Partners

The IRO reviewed the Regulation 44 visits and records held by the relevant homes to ensure an overview of the children's experience was obtained.

In response to the second action, Thurrock does not currently have any residential specialist schools registered as children's homes. Thurrock's LADO was provided with details of children who fell within the scope of our review and contacted the relevant

authority's LADO for the children identified in response to the first action and sought re-assurance and identified no outstanding concerns

No new concerns about the conduct of a member of the workforce were identified during the review process in any of the settings which required Thurrock to share concerns with the host Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Two Reviews identified historic LADO referrals which Thurrock were aware of and which have been concluded with no further action required.

Review Outcomes

The Quality and Safety Reviews largely identified good care that meets needs.

- Feedback from parents and professionals around the child expressed satisfaction with the care and education provided in the current settings.
- No current child protection concerns were identified during the Quality and Safety Reviews.
- There are no specialist schools registered as children's homes in Thurrock.
- No concerns were identified and notified by host authority LADO's regarding the settings in their areas where Thurrock children are in placement.
- Supervision of staff is timely and there is management oversight of incidents in placements.
- Reg 44 visits were generally positive. Where a child was placed in Wales, a Reg 80 report was seen and reviewed and was positive.
- Risk assessments for children were up to date
- Behaviour plans were in place and agreed with parents
- Contact for children was generally positive but the impact of COVID restrictions were noted.

- Complaints and incidents of concern appear to have been appropriately reported to the relevant agencies including the LADO and appropriate procedures followed. However the Review highlighted those referrals of concern may not always be known by the placing authority of other children in placement who are not deemed the subject of concern.
- The recording and dispensation of medication was noted as a concern due to errors made by staff during this Review in more than one child. These incidents appear to have been dealt with appropriately but highlighted a concern about how medication is managed in these arrangements and the need for further training in respect of dispensing medication.
- One provision had six notifications to Ofsted, one of which triggered a visit by the regulator the outcome indicated that these were dealt with appropriately by the provider.
- Staffing recruitment was identified as an issue. One home limited placements in response and the other used managers within the organisation which was positive as it provided continuity, but this was not sustainable long term.
- One parent expressed some concern about cultural matching of staff within the placement.

The review highlighted the following actions and key learning and development points to assist in improving practice in commissioning and monitoring such placements:

1. CLA Reviews to consider the wider functioning of the home which may have an impact on children in the setting and to embed the quality and safety review process into the child looked after review process.
2. Review to take place to look at the consistency in performance management in the areas of commissioning checks, and contract monitoring. This should include multi-agency feedback, commissioning visits and oversight.
3. During matching and reviews, how placements are able to meet the cultural needs of children should be explored.
4. A health led pathway to monitor and assess processes in place where the residential placement is responsible for dispensing medication

5. Placing Authority LADO to be advised when a child is placed in a specialist school which is a registered children's home and relevant checks to be completed with the host authority LADO.
6. A better understanding of the range of LADO referrals made to the Host authority when they do not relate to the placing authority's child but do relate to standards of care within homes.
7. This report and lessons from the Quality and Safety Review to be shared with the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) and an action plan to be developed.
8. This report to be shared with Thurrock's Corporate Parenting Committee at the next available date.