



Dear Director of Children's Services

**National Review – Children with disabilities and complex health needs placed in residential settings**

**Urgent action required**

As you will be aware, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel ("The Panel") is currently undertaking a national review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings. The published Terms of Reference for the Review are [here](#).

The Review is considering the experiences of children placed in three specialist independent residential settings located in the Doncaster area (Fullerton House, Wilsic Hall and Wheatley House) and operated by the Hesley Group. The Review is being led by Dr Susan Tranter, supported by Dame Christine Lenehan, Director of the Council for Disabled Children (CDC), for the National Children's Bureau (NCB). The Review is being completed in two phases. We plan to publish our Phase One report in the autumn.

For the sake of clarity, the Review and this letter is focussed on children with disabilities and complex health needs who are looked after children and who are currently placed in residential specialist schools which are registered as children's homes. It is estimated that there are around 1,700 children nationally who would meet these criteria. This review is considering allegations of widespread abuse (and which are subject to a live criminal and associated investigation). We expect that families of children living in similar settings may rightly be concerned about the safety and welfare of their children if and when they learn about what has happened in the Hesley provision in Doncaster.

Phase One has considered the experiences of children placed in the Hesley provision in Doncaster. This includes developing an understanding of how children came to be placed in these settings, what happened to them and what factors and issues may have contributed to their experiences of abuse and neglect. Phase Two will consider the broader safeguarding needs of this group of children and young people and will make recommendations to

improve safeguarding policy and practice. Work on Phase Two will commence in late autumn and conclude by March 2023.

I have recently written to the Secretary of State for Education, providing him with an update on the emergent findings from Phase One of the Review and drawing his attention to three urgent actions that the Panel believes to be necessary. Responsibility for two of these urgent actions lies with Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) and the third action lies with OFSTED. This letter is therefore to advise you of the two actions that fall to DCSs and to ask for your cooperation in initiating them in the suggested timescale. This letter also provides you, for information, with a brief explanation of that third action.

Children in care with disabilities and complex health needs in specialist residential settings should be living in safe and good quality placements. However, the serious abuse and neglect revealed by this Review and the related criminal and associated investigation means that there is a need for additional assurance about the safety and well-being of children living in similar types of placements.

The Panel hope that you will work in collaboration with your local safeguarding partners, Integrated Care Systems (ICS) children's leads, NHSE regional leads or regional teams, the Department for Education (DfE) and the Panel to undertake the two relevant actions detailed below. We believe that these actions are essential to provide assurance that other children living in similar types of residential placements are safe and are receiving the most appropriate and high-quality care.

### **Urgent Action One**

- I. Directors of Children's Services to ensure that Quality and Safety Reviews are completed for all children with complex needs and disabilities currently living within placements with the same registrations (i.e., residential specialist schools registered as children's homes) to ensure they are in safe, quality placements. Please see Appendix A for a list of relevant points and questions to support these Reviews. These reviews can be incorporated into routine care review planning processes but should ensure that all the key points and questions identified in Appendix A are properly addressed. You will wish to ensure that the Reviews are carried out by and involve appropriate professionals. Reviews should apply to all children in such settings, that is those who are resident for part of the year as well as those who are resident for all of the year.
- II. This action should be led and overseen by the placing (i.e., home) local authority DCS. If a Review identifies concerns about the conduct of a member of the workforce, the placing local authority may need to share the concerns with the host Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) if the threshold has been met.
- III. DCSs are asked to provide an overview report on key findings and issues to both their local corporate parenting board and to local

safeguarding partners, together with assurance that the Quality and Safety Reviews have been completed.

- IV. DCSs are also asked to send a copy of this overview report on the Quality and Safety Reviews to the relevant DfE regional improvement support lead (RISL) (see Appendix B for a list). The Panel's national review has highlighted how information may be held locally but that it is also important to develop a fuller and more comprehensive picture of quality in these type of placements. This will also allow for regional and national assurance that these actions have been undertaken.

### **Urgent Action Two**

In relation to this group of children (as defined above), all Directors of Children's Services should ensure:

- I. That the host authority LADO for each individual establishment reviews all information on any LADO referrals, complaints and concerns over the last 3 years relating to the workforce in such establishments to ensure these have been appropriately actioned.
- II. The host authority LADO should then contact any local authorities who currently have children placed in the establishments in their area if there are any outstanding enquiries being carried out regarding staff employed in the home.

You are asked to confirm that urgent action two has been taken through the overview report that you will be providing to the DfE Regional Improvement Support Lead on Action One above. DfE in turn will confirm to the Panel that the Reviews have taken place.

### **Timescales for Actions One and Two**

The two actions above should be completed within **three months** from the date of this letter. We would then expect that the overview reports are completed and shared with local corporate parenting boards, safeguarding partners and your Regional Improvement Support Lead (RISL) for your area (see list at Appendix B) within a month of the completion of the actions.

### **Urgent Action Three**

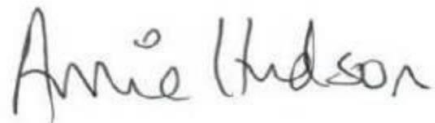
You will also want to note that Ofsted are being asked to conduct an immediate analysis of their evidence around workforce sufficiency focusing on its suitability, training, and support. More information will follow in the Panel's Phase One report due to be published in the autumn.

I am copying this letter to the Chairs of the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and the Business Manager for each area's Safeguarding Partners. I would request that the Business Manager forwards a copy of this letter to the relevant statutory partners. I would also request that you forward a copy of this letter to your local authority's Chief Executive for their information.

If you have any queries on any of the above, please email the relevant RISL for your area (as they have been fully briefed and can support you with any questions).

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annie Hudson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

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Annie Hudson  
Chair of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

## Appendix A

The Quality and Safety Reviews will ensure that:

- 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.

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.

## APPENDIX B

Names and contact details for the Regional Improvement Support Lead

<b>Region</b>	<b>RISL</b>	<b>Contact</b>
London	Céline Dignan Shannen Grant	<a href="mailto:Celine.dignan@education.gov.uk">Celine.dignan@education.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Shannen.grant@education.gov.uk">Shannen.grant@education.gov.uk</a>
North West	Ivan West	<a href="mailto:Ivan.west@education.gov.uk">Ivan.west@education.gov.uk</a>
East of England	Jo Page	<a href="mailto:Jo.page@education.gov.uk">Jo.page@education.gov.uk</a>
South East	David Myers	<a href="mailto:David.myers@education.gov.uk">David.myers@education.gov.uk</a>
South West	Genevieve Cox	<a href="mailto:Genevieve.cox@education.gov.uk">Genevieve.cox@education.gov.uk</a>
North East	Sarah King	<a href="mailto:Sarah.king@education.gov.uk">Sarah.king@education.gov.uk</a>
Yorkshire and the Humber	Kate Gillan	<a href="mailto:Kate.gillan@education.gov.uk">Kate.gillan@education.gov.uk</a>
East Midlands	Stewart Bembridge	<a href="mailto:Stewart.bembridge@education.gov.uk">Stewart.bembridge@education.gov.uk</a>
West Midlands	Rachel Newton	<a href="mailto:Rachel.newton@education.gov.uk">Rachel.newton@education.gov.uk</a>