

# LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

<b>REPORT:</b>	Corporate Parenting Panel
<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	Quality & Safety Review re Children in Care with disabilities & complex needs.
<b>DIRECTOR:</b>	Róisín Madden, Director; Children's Social Care Children, Young People & Education Directorate
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	Adam Fearon-Stanley; Service Manager IRO & Participation; <a href="mailto:Adam.Fearon-Stanley@Croydon.gov.uk">Adam.Fearon-Stanley@Croydon.gov.uk</a> 0208 726 6000 x24164
<b>LEAD MEMBER:</b>	Cllr Maria Gatland; Cabinet Member: Children, Families & Education

## 1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 Executive Summary report of Croydon Council's review of children living in residential specialist schools registered as children's homes, as part of the National Panel review into Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex needs in residential settings (see background reports).

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the reasons set out in the report the Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended:

- 2.1 To note the contents of the report
- 2.2 To endorse the recommendations of the report

## 3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To implement learning identified from the review

## 4 REPORT

In August 2022, the Directors of Children's Services across England & Wales were asked by Chair of the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel to undertake the following actions:

- To ensure that Quality and Safety Reviews are completed for all children in care with complex needs and disabilities currently living within placements with the same registrations (e.g., residential specialist schools registered as children's homes) to ensure they are in safe, quality placements.
- That the host authority Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for each individual establishment reviews all information on any LADO referrals, complaints and concerns over the past 3 years relating to the workforce in such establishments to ensure these have been appropriately actioned.
- 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

This was in response to serious concerns about the lived experience of children looked after with disabilities who had been cared for by specific group of providers in Doncaster, and the subsequent need to ensure all children living in similar circumstances had a review of their safety and standard of care provided to them. It is estimated that there are 1,700 children living in these settings nationally.

In Croydon Quality and Safety Reviews for the relevant children were undertaken between September and November 2022. As the number of children is small, precise details have not been provided to protect the privacy of the children & families involved.

### **Summary of Findings:**

From many different lenses children and young people are thriving and having a good quality of life. Wherever possible children and young people see their family.

Most parents wish their child to be where they are living and feel that they receive a good standard of care. Where this is not the case, support to acknowledge and address concerns is in place. We are not hearing concern from key professionals, albeit many of the key professionals are employed by providers.

There are no indications that safeguarding issues are minimised, and when known they are addressed by the local authority and provider. There are no reported issues with gaining access to children and young people. Social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) invest time in getting to know our children and young people to understand their unique needs. Our quality assurance mechanisms almost always identify delay where action is required.

### **Recommendations:**

5 areas of learning were identified; the working group will meet on 19 January 2023 to progress these recommendations with support of CYPE Snr Leaders, key partners and the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership.

### **Children's Wishes and Feelings:**

Several children have had advocates. Exploration with Children with Disabilities (CWD) managers regarding the increasing use of advocacy and the provision of Independent Visitors (IV) as a further safety net is advised, as a way of ensuring children and young people are included in different reviewing processes appropriate to their needs. This will include awareness raising about the Independent Visitor Scheme, Advocacy service, the provision of

additional support to Independent Visitors in training & development if matched with our children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

#### **Our use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ):**

It is apparent that the existing format of this method of identifying emotional health and wellbeing needs, is not fit for our children with disabilities and complex needs. Specifically, where children and young people are unable to verbalise their fears and worries and we are dependent on observation and interpretation, primarily by adults who may not be attuned to their needs or be harming them. This will be raised with the Principal Social Worker to consider alternate approaches to evaluating children and young people's emotional and mental wellbeing. CWD social workers and managers will be consulted regarding their experience of use of SDQ, alternate approaches, we will benchmark with other local authorities approaches and we will explore approaches used by organisations in the charitable sector.

#### **Our oversight of aspects of medical care received by children and young people:**

This group of children receive a high level of medical input. It is necessary for us to evaluate how we have effective oversight both of their holistic health which is captured at health assessments and the detail of how medical care is delivered and recorded daily. This would include 'Pro Re Nata' (PRN) decisions which would not necessarily be explored in any other reviewing context. PRN decisions refer to the administration of medications as and when needed not to a prescribed schedule. There will be consideration with CLA Health Team of how the evaluation of these elements can be incorporated into health assessments, which would support partners to improve recording standards, providing assurance to the child's family and the corporate parent. We will explore via our Commissioning Team and Southwest Integrated Care Board area community pharmacists how we would set expectations with providers re PRN decisions and the extent to which families & we as the corporate parent are sighted on this.

#### **Our oversight of aspects of contractual agreements around staffing:**

We should ensure contractual agreements that stipulate the staffing that children and young people require to be cared for safely are met. Where these agreements are not met the provider needs to be required to notify the commissioner. There is a requirement to strengthen monitoring of this aspect of contractual agreements either through existing contract monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms or as a specific focus. We will explore with our Commissioning team how we currently monitor this aspect of contractual agreements and where this can be strengthened.

The action plan to deliver these recommendations will be drawn up by the working group that has undertaken these reviews and several are already being considered in advance of its next meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023. It is anticipated that these recommendations will be completed by 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023

## **7. CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

- 7.1 This review contributes to the Croydon Council priority to 'Ensure that children & young people have opportunities to learn, develop and fulfil their potential', and 'Keep vulnerable children and young people safe from harm'.

## **8. IMPLICATIONS**

### **8.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1.1 None

### **8.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.2.1 None

### **8.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

8.3.1 The outcome of these reviews will improve the provision of services for children with disabilities and complex needs.

## **9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

9.1 [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

9.2 [Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings - Phase 1 report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)