

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

12 JANUARY 2023

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

UPDATE ON THE CARE INSPECTORATE WALES INSPECTION OF BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES IN 2022

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Corporate Parenting Committee with the outcome of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspections of Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) Children's Residential Care Homes during 2022. This report relates to inspection activity detailed below:

- Maple Tree House on 28 June 2022
- Sunny Bank on 04 August 2022
- Harwood House on 13 September 2022
- Bakers Way on 29 September 2022

2 Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Helping people and communities to be more self-reliant** – taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human, and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's objectives.

3. Background

3.1 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) are responsible for inspecting all regulated care and support services, including Children's Homes, in Wales. Inspections consist of four key stages, inspection planning and preparation; the inspection visit; feedback; and reporting. During the process, inspectors will make judgements as to how well the service is performing under four core themes, Well-being; Care and Support; Environment; and Leadership and Management.

3.2 In the case of Children's Homes, CIW will make annual inspections as part of their rolling programme. There are two main types of inspection:

- Full Inspections: During a full inspection CIW will check that providers are providing a service according to the law. They will also check that the service is meeting the conditions of their registration and operating in line with their Statement of Purpose.
- Focused Inspections: These normally happen when concerns are raised or to follow up on areas of improvements identified at previous inspections. This type of inspection may only look at some aspects of a service.

3.3 All CIW inspections are unannounced, although in exceptional circumstances they may contact the service a day or so in advance to minimise disruption or distress.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 The CIW Inspection reports have been received and the summary of findings is set out below.

Summary of findings Maple Tree House

4.2 Maple Tree House provided care and support for up to six children / young people within the age range 8 – 17 years (mixed gender) at any one time. This consisted of four placements within the assessment facility and two within the emergency provision.

4.3 Maple Tree House aimed to offer a therapeutic environment for children and young people, using a trauma informed approach to provide the most effective support possible. This, in turn, aimed to enable them to understand their individual circumstances, develop resilience and self-care skills.

4.4 The emergency provision offered short-term specialist support for children / young people who are experiencing difficult circumstances and who are in immediate need of care and support, for a period of up to 28 days.

4.5 Maple Tree assessment service sought to provide children / young people aged 8-17 years with intensive placements up to a period of 6 months and focussed on assessments and therapeutic interventions to stabilise the child's / young person's behaviour, work on improving any risk-taking behaviours, re-integrate to education, training or employment where necessary and identify the most suitable long-term move on placements.

4.6 Maple Tree House had been open since February 2019 and from the outset there were challenges in relation to consistent and robust management oversight, stability and skill mix of the workforce and the wide range of issues and level of complexity the children who have lived there have experienced. Consequently, the service

delivered has been impacted upon and when improvements made, sustaining them was a continuous challenge. This was reflected in the most recent Inspection and the findings below will provide more detail.

- 4.7 The inspection concluded that children who had been in Maple Tree House had not been supported to have a positive care experience. There were a number of deficits in the skills, experience and training regimes and the stability and permanence of the workforce. CIW noted that this impacted on the ability of the service to meet the identified care planned needs of the children living there, support the children to meet their wellbeing outcomes and as a result children were placed at risk. Issues were also identified with routines, consistency of relationships with carers and reporting and recording systems. Urgent action was required to ensure children were always safeguarded. The Council worked through an Escalating Concerns Safeguarding process and the home entered a period of dormancy, with intense care planning, to enable the two remaining children to transition to their new placements.
- 4.8 The inspection noted that the manager and care staff were committed and wanted to provide a good service, but the arrangements to support them to deliver the standard of care children deserve were not adequate and had not been implemented effectively. Governance arrangements were not fit for purpose and the oversight of the quality of the service by the registered manager and responsible individual, including the standard of care and support provided to children was poor. Quality assurance systems had not been effective in recognising and being responsive, where it was clear there were serious issues in the service which were adversely impacting on children's well-being.
- 4.9 Just prior to this inspection the Council had undertaken its own independent investigation and as a result a decision was already made to place the care home into an Escalating Concerns process under safeguarding procedures so there was significant multi-agency oversight whilst the home was operational. CIW attended the escalating concerns meetings. There was alignment with the Council's own findings and that of inspectors. The service was required to make rapid improvements and a 'corrective action plan' was put in place. CIW inspection identified additional areas where regulatory standards were not met most notably a failure in the standards of care and support. As a result, CIW issued the service with thirteen Priority Action Notices and two areas where improvement was required. The service will not resume until all of the areas for improvement have been addressed and there is confidence that this will be sustained.

Summary of Findings Sunny Bank

- 4.10 Sunny Bank provides care and support for up to four young people between the ages of 8 and 17 years. The home is in a residential area of Porthcawl and close to a range of amenities and transport links to other towns and cities.
- 4.11 Young people are encouraged to pursue activities that interest them and maintain contact (where appropriate) with family and friends. They are supported to attend and

engage in education, however not all young people participate. Young people's safety is promoted by care staff, and regular reviews of their risky behaviours are carried out to ensure safe practice is upheld. However, at the time of the inspection, some young people were regularly engaging in risk taking behaviours and spending significant periods of time away from the home, which may have been having a detrimental impact on their physical and emotional health.

- 4.12 Care staff receive support via supervision and training; however, these have been sporadic and require improvement. The leadership and management are operational; however, improvements are required to ensure a full complement of permanent care staff is available to provide consistency to the assessed care and support needs for young people which reflects the statement of purpose. There are systems in place to monitor and review the quality of the service and these could be further improved to provide more oversight and guidance in relation to missing from care incidents and risky behaviours.
- 4.13 Three areas of non-compliance were identified during the Inspection. However, as no immediate or significant risk for people using the service was identified they were identified as Areas for Improvement (as opposed to Priority Action Notices).

Summary of Findings Harwood House

- 4.14 Harwood House is a care home operated by Bridgend County Borough Council. The care home can accommodate up to three young people aged 8-19 years who have a learning disability. Care staff know the young people well and are dedicated to improving ways in which they can contribute to their views, using pictorials and guides to support making choices. The care staff team include male and female staff and there are a few staff vacancies.
- 4.15 Care staff are motivated and receive support and training from the manager. There are systems for assessing, planning, and reviewing young people's care and support. Systems and process to monitor potential safeguarding incidents have been improved following the inspection.
- 4.16 No areas of non-compliance were identified.

Summary of Findings Bakers Way

- 4.17 Young people receive care and support that supports their well-being. Care staff are competent and undertake their responsibilities. The environment allows young people to feel safe, play and have fun. In turn, parents can have a break from their usual caring responsibilities. Leadership and management are effective, the manager has clear oversight of the day to day running of the care home and the responsible individual provides scrutiny to further ensure the service continues to be effective.
- 4.18 No areas of non-compliance were identified.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- 4.19 In addition to the Corrective Action Plan developed through the escalating concerns process, an additional Action Plan was developed to address the Priority Action Notices issued by Care Inspectorate Wales. As this was the second occasion on which there had been high level of regulatory concerns in respect of Maple Tree House, the Escalating Concerns process oversaw the temporary closure of the service when all children living there had safely moved to other regulated settings. The outcome of the Escalating Concerns process has also been reported to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board.
- 4.20 Maple Tree House remains in a period of dormancy to enable a root and branch review to be completed into the operating model and workforce skill mix required for a specialist assessment care home operated by a Local Authority. This work is ongoing, and a revised operating model will be presented to the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting which will reflect the lessons learned. A very early reflection was that to be a significant provider of high quality services there needed to be a dedicated Responsible Individual (RI) for Children's Social Care Homes provided by the Council. An appointment to this post has been made and the appointee is progressing their RI application with Care Inspectorate Wales.
- 4.21 An Action Plan was also developed in relation to the areas of improvement identified by Care Inspectorate Wales for Sunny Bank and appropriate steps have been taken to ensure compliance in these areas.
- 4.22 In addition to the Action Plans, Placements and Provider Services are currently in the process of reviewing and updating the Quality Assurance Framework for Children's Residential Care. This work is intended to ensure that there is a robust and effective Quality Assurance Framework in place to serve as an "early warning" system to prevent deterioration in the Quality of Care being offered across all of the Local Authority's Children's Residential Care Homes.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report; therefore, it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Implications

7.1 The implementation of the duties and responsibilities under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) supports the promotion of two of the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 within the County Borough of Bridgend. By promoting an environment that maximises people's physical and mental well-being and by supporting children, young people, adults and their carers and families to fulfil their potential no matter what their circumstances, the well-being goals of a Healthier and more equal Bridgend and Wales are supported.

7.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

- **Long term:** The residential provision has been assessed to meet the needs of the current and future looked after children population.
- **Prevention:** Harwood House enables children with complex needs to remain living in the county whilst Bakers Way provides respite to support disabled children and young people to remain living within their families. The statements of purpose will support the other residential provisions to run effectively meeting the needs of Looked After Children. Maple Tree House provided accommodation which enabled children with complex needs to remain in the community. The multi-disciplinary team facilitated the return of children who are currently placed outside of county. The wrap around support package aimed to reduce and prevent 'long term' residential care episodes, transitioning to a return to families or foster care.
- **Integration:** Children and young people have homes in the county borough facilitating familial contact and education provision being provided locally, supporting and maintaining their community and ethnic links.
- **Collaboration:** All of the units have strong links to health, education, police and other local community services to meet the holistic needs of children and young people placed. The units work in close collaboration with other departments within the Local Authority as well to meet service user needs.
- **Involvement:** Each of the residential units review feedback from children and young people and their families through mechanisms including meetings, evaluation forms, complaints and compliments.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee note the report.

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11. Background Documents

None