

To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 19 January 2023

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Inspections of registered children's residential houses by the Care Inspectorate

1. Summary

- 1.1. Residential childcare refers to the service provided within our children's houses and is a form of accommodation for children who require to be cared for out with a family setting. Residential care is provided by Renfrewshire Council when the specific needs of children and young people means that they cannot remain living with their parents or in an alternative family setting such as kinship or foster care.
- 1.2. Social work and social care services are subject to a range of audit and scrutiny activities to ensure that they are undertaking all statutory duties and providing appropriate care and support to vulnerable individuals and groups. A number of social work and social care services including residential children's houses are required to register with the Care Inspectorate. Registered services are subject to regular inspection by the Care Inspectorate and the outcomes of the inspections are published on the Care Inspectorate website.
- 1.3. Generally, residential children's houses are inspected once each year by the Care Inspectorate. The inspections are made on an unannounced basis. The frequency of inspections was reduced during the last two years as a result of the COVID pandemic. It is expected that the programme of annual inspections will recommence.
- 1.4. Renfrewshire has 4 residential children's houses. At the present time there are 22 children and young people living in our houses. This report summarises the outcomes from the inspections of our residential Children's Houses during the past two years. Two of the houses received positive inspections, one had a grade of adequate and one graded as weak.

- 1.5. Where a children's house receives a grade of weak or adequate a formal support plan is put in place to address the areas identified as requiring improvement. The improvement activity for the relevant children's houses is included in this report.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Elected members are asked to note:
- a) the findings from the inspections of Renfrewshire's children's houses undertaken in 2021 and 2022; and
 - b) areas for service development and associated improvement actions.
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3. Background

- 3.1. Care services in Scotland require to register with the Care Inspectorate. Our four children's houses are registered with the Care Inspectorate as providers of residential care and are consequently generally subject to at least annual inspection by the regulator. The annual inspection arrangements were disrupted during the COVID pandemic but are now back in place.
- 3.2. The Care Inspectorate uses a proportionate risk model of inspection. Services graded as 'Good' or above in previous inspections are subject to low-intensity inspections. Services are assessed on up to four quality themes:
- Quality of Care and Support
 - Quality of Environment
 - Quality of Staffing
 - Quality of Management and Leadership.
- 3.3. The scrutiny process applies 5 key questions about the difference a care service makes to people's wellbeing, and the quality of the elements that contribute to that. These include:
- 1. How well do we support people's wellbeing?
 - 2. How good is our leadership
 - 3. How good is our staff team?
 - 4. How good is our setting?
 - 5. How well is our care and support planned?
- 3.4. The Care Inspectorate utilises the following gradings across each of the areas considered during each inspection:
- 1. Unsatisfactory
 - 2. Weak
 - 3. Adequate
 - 4. Good
 - 5. Very good
 - 6. Excellent

- 3.5. The Care Inspectorate publishes the inspection reports on its website. In addition to awarding grades in each of the themes inspected, the Care Inspectorate can make a recommendation or put in place a requirement. A recommendation will set out an action that would improve or develop the quality of the service, but failure to meet a recommendation would not result in enforcement by the Care Inspectorate. Requirements are legally enforceable and set out what is required by a care service to comply with the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 or with the conditions of registration.
- 3.6. The Care Inspectorate changed the way they report the outcome of inspections in the past year. As a result of the change two of the houses do not have grades for each area inspected, rather an overall grading is awarded on the following statement: "How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?"

Recent inspection activity in Children's Services

- 3.7. Renfrewshire children's services provides 4 residential children's houses. At the present time there are 22 children and young people living in our children's houses.
- 3.8. All Four of Renfrewshire's residential children's houses for children and young people were inspected between February 2021 & October 2022. Our residential children's houses are known as:
- Brediland
 - Beech Avenue
 - Arkleston
 - Barochan Road
- 3.9. Brediland was inspected on 16th February 2021 and a subsequent report published (appendix 1). The inspectorate reported that they saw that children and young people at Brediland Road benefitted from meaningful relationships with staff who provided consistent and compassionate care. They received strong feedback from external professionals and made comment that they witnessed solid evidence of one-to-one work with young people. From the 5 key areas scrutinised, the inspectors graded 4 areas Very Good (Grade 5) & one area Good (Grade 4).
- 3.10. Beech Avenue was inspected on 14th October 2021 and a subsequent report was published (appendix 2) detailing significant strengths in the delivery of care alongside some recommendations for improvement. From the 4 key areas scrutinised the inspectors awarded 2 areas as Good and 2 areas as adequate. This inspection highlights a strength in the relationships and interactions with young people in response to their needs and the staff perseverance in doing so.
- 3.11. The areas of improvement focussed on the impact of staff and management absence. Beech Avenue was inspected at the height of the pandemic when they had experienced significant and sustained staff absence. Whilst cover arrangements were made, the temporary nature of these did impact on the consistency of approach in supporting the young people and the overall evidence of leadership. All areas of improvement identified by the Care Inspectorate have been addressed in full.

- 3.12. Arkleston was inspected on 3rd August 2022 and the report published shortly thereafter (appendix 3). The inspectors recorded an overall grade of 5 (Very Good) in respect of Arkleston. The new grading and reporting process by the Care inspectorate means that the individual grades on the areas identified in paragraph 3.2 were not provided. The inspectors made comment on the staff team having excellent understanding of trauma informed practice. They highlighted that young people were supported & included in their plans to achieve their goals & that good relationships were evidenced, and support was given where required. The inspectors further reported evidence of young people being supported to access mental health services appropriately & a good understanding of how best to support the young people to keep safe. They noted that good relationships with young people who had moved on from the house were evident. There were no recommendations for improvement in relation to Arkleston.
- 3.13. Barochan was inspected in September 2022 with the inspectors providing a grade of 2 (Weak) (appendix 4) . During the inspection a letter of serious concern was issued by the Care Inspectorate which the service responded to immediately. The inspection reported areas of good practice but also highlighted areas of concern and made several requirements. At the time of inspection there was no dedicated manager to Barochan although interim arrangements were in place during the recruitment process. The inspectors concluded that leadership within the house had been a concern for some time and the temporary arrangement made during the recruitment process had exacerbated the issue instead of resolving it. The absence of effective leadership had led to inconsistencies in practice.
- 3.14. The recruitment process was unsuccessful and as such the service has identified a permanent replacement manager by moving an existing manager. The service is confident that the new manager has the appropriate skills and experience to address the concerns noted and work in partnership with the care inspectorate on a journey of improvement.
- 3.15. The inspection focussed on the young people's safety. They highlighted that staff responding to the challenges of one young person meant that the needs of others were not always met satisfactorily. Risk assessments and child plans have been reviewed in response to the concerns highlighted and additional strategies put in place to manage these issues.
- 3.16. Bullying was highlighted as an area in this inspection and the previous inspection. Although it was recognised that measures had been put in place to try to address this, the inspectors did not believe these measures were effective. The complexity of the group mean that this issue requires constant monitoring and intervention which is already being led by the new manager. This will be evidenced in ongoing partnership work with our link inspector.
- 3.17. The use of "safe holds" was highlighted as an area of concern and the need for refresher training. The delivery of this refresher training had been impacted upon by the Covid 19 pandemic and a plan was already in place for staff to receive this, but the inspectors believed this should have taken place sooner.
- 3.18. The inspectors also highlighted the need for sufficient staffing levels to be in place. Resourcing our children's houses has been extremely challenging due to the Covid 19 pandemic and the service experiencing significant recruitment and retention challenges. The challenges we face in Renfrewshire regarding

the retention and recruitment of social care staff are unfortunately in keeping with challenges across the whole social care sector in Scotland. Staffing levels are being monitored monthly with reports provided to the Children's Manger and the Head of Service.

- 3.19. A robust action plan has been developed to address the finding of the inspection at Barochan and to meet the requirements imposed. The Care Inspectorate have agreed to re-inspect within the next 6 months rather than waiting the full year so that we can evidence the improvements we are confident will be made quickly.

Implications of this report

- 1. Financial**
None.

- 2. HR and Organisational Development**
The service faces challenges in recruiting staff to the residential sector. There is a national challenge at this time across social work and social care in terms of recruitment.

- 3. Community/Council Planning**
None

- 4. Legal**
None.

- 5. Property/Assets**
None.

- 6. Information Technology**
None.

- 7. Equality and Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.

- 8. Health and Safety**
None.

- 9. Procurement**
None.

- 10. Risk**
None.

- 11. Privacy Impact**
None.

12. Cosla Policy Position

None.

13. Climate Risk

None.

List of Background Papers

(a) None

Children's Services

KS 30/11/22

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