

JERSEY CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

BOARD OF VISITORS

ANNUAL REPORT

October 2012.

Introduction.

There have been many changes and much progress made since the 2011 report.

A major recruitment drive at the beginning of the year has resulted in an increase in Board Members to 13, with a further 7 prospective members due to start their training in 2013.

The Board now consists of

Founder Members

Sheila Warren (chair)

Alice Chanter (Deputy Chair)

Louise Clarke

Anne Southern

New Members

Rosie Baker

Helen Duncan

Nia Evans

Catherine Kelleher

Lisa Le Maistre

Richard Le Quelenec

Deborah Morris-Monro

Colin Pateman

Louise Warran

Purpose

Whilst changes have occurred the purpose of the Board remains the same: To visit open and secure residential units in Jersey to meet with the children and young people to help monitor aspects of their life in care. The members endeavour to monitor that standards are maintained, identify concerns and issues, and discuss these at Board meetings and to recommend actions to Children's Services.

Terms of Reference. (T.O.R.)

Our T.O.R. state that the Board of Visitors (B.O.V.) has been set up under the auspices of the Child Policy Group (C.P.G.) to monitor the services and care provided to vulnerable young people in the care of the States of Jersey.

(A review of the full T.O.R. was carried out by the Board and accepted by the C.P.G. in June 2012. As discussed later in this report.)

Overall Review 2012.

The beginning of 2012 saw eight original Board Members in place. In February the Board were greatly saddened and shocked by the sudden and untimely death of Board Member Keith Shaw. As the only male representative on the Board and as a deeply committed member of the Board Keith will be greatly missed.

Conflict arose within the Board regarding canvassing for new members. Aware of the time that would be needed to instigate this move and her own personal circumstances, Susan Parker, Chair of the B.O.V. decided to stand down and take a six month sabbatical from the Board. At a meeting held on the 3rd of March Sheila Warren was elected chair with Alice Chanter remaining as Deputy.

Now numbering six, the present B.O.V. felt it was imperative to immediately begin a recruitment drive if it was to continue. Meetings were held between the new Chair and the Health minister Deputy Anne Pryke and also with Mr Mike Taylor chair of the Jersey Child Protection Committee (J.C.P.C.) This resulted in a hugely successful campaign, led by the Health Minister's team at Health and Social Services (H.S.S.D.) A public meeting held at the General Hospital on May 29th was attended by 72 Islanders interested in the role. Subsequently 52 applications were received of which 18 volunteers were invited for interview and 16 successfully recruited.

It was decided to split the volunteers into two groups with the first nine receiving their training from the J.C.P.C. staff in July; the second group will hopefully commence their training in February 2013. Following initial training, and further interviews, the first group were taken on introductory visits to the Homes by Mr Mike Bowyer (Manager Greenfields Campus) and a representative of the young people who is a resident in one of the Homes. August saw our new members attending their first Board meeting and in September they began shared visits with an experienced member of the B.O.V.

Prior to their acceptance as Members of the Board, the six remaining original members had worked hard to alter the Board's T.O.R. to include a change of policy from bi-monthly to monthly visits and also increased the board meetings to monthly. Advice on boundaries and limitations were also included. As previously stated these changes were ratified by the C.P.G. in June 2012. The official reporting forms were also updated and statistics began to be collated of hours spent by individual Board Members on Board business.

Since its inauguration in May 2010 and commencement of visiting in July of that year much progress has been made both in relationship and organisational matters. At that time the original Board Members felt that as their remit stated they had to be seen to be totally independent of Management and as such declined offers of secretarial assistance and Management presence at Board Meetings.

It was felt that our prime task was to be accepted by the young people and staff, to be seen as a resource, rather than a form of scrutiny. Two years on, we now feel that this has been achieved, but we have also recognised that it is beneficial to the workings of the B.O.V. and hopefully to the young people and staff of the Residential Homes, that we forge closer links with Management to aid better and speedier communication.

To this end the Health Minister and Mr Mike Bowyer (Manager Greenfields Campus) were invited to attend a Board meeting on May 15th to discuss a way forward to achieve this aim. Following this meeting Mr Bowyer was nominated by the Children's Department to attend part of our monthly Board meetings to discuss any new concerns expressed, and progress made, and exchange relevant information. This arrangement has proved to be instrumental in improving the Board's communication with Management and staff.

The Chairperson was asked to do a short presentation at a work shop held on May 18th at St Pauls Centre to explain the role of the Board to States Members. Representatives of the Board are also increasingly invited to attend meetings, such as that on the Strategic Framework for Children and Young People held recently, and to take part in events that have an effect on the role of the B.O.V.

Recent Board Changes.

Two of the original Board Members have resigned from the Board effective from September 1st. Both do so with regret, having taken on new professional roles that make it impossible for them to continue as Board Members. One has been appointed as Senior Educational Welfare Officer and therefore experiences a conflict of interests, but will continue to take a special interest in our progress. The other has been promoted to chair of the Employment Tribunal and at present can no longer afford the time needed to perform her duties as a Board Member to her satisfaction. Mrs Susan Parker, former Chair of the B.O.V. has also decided not to return to the Board following her six month sabbatical.

The Board would like to record their sincere thanks to them all for their hard work which has been instrumental in providing Jersey with its first independent Board of Visitors for the Children's Residential Homes.

As stated the Board has experienced many changes during the past year but feel they have developed into a strong core group who are united in their endeavours to keep the interests of the children at the centre of everything they do, and to provide a meaningful service to the young people in the care system.

In welcoming our nine new members, of both genders, we are heartened by the range of age and experience each new member brings to the Board and look forward to working with them all.

They have recorded their first impressions for the Annual Report as follows:

"New Board Members have been warmly welcomed by the existing members, and will provide a much needed boost to the pool of visitors available for the monthly visits to the Residential Homes.

Our initial training covered exploration of the experiences that have resulted in children and young people being taken into care, as well as how abuse affects them and their behaviour. The second session gave us an in-depth overview of the care system, from initial intervention to placement, as well as ongoing review and Management systems currently in place. This has enabled us to develop our understanding of the reasons for, and challenges presented by the care system.

The sessions were informative, with practical and helpful details of procedures regarding policy relating to both young people and professionals. The information we received was made more valuable by a realistic, practical and sensible explanation and understanding of what the Board is trying to achieve through its work.

Funding was made available for us to attend, along with the present Board, the J.C.P.C. conference “listen 2 me” - hearing and responding to the voice of the child- which reinforced and expanded our knowledge and understanding of the importance of non-judgemental listening to young people in care. It also enabled us to meet with others working with children.

Hearing directly from one young person currently in care was perhaps the highlight for many of us. Listening to how his group were encouraged to vocalise concerns and find solutions, which have now been implemented, was powerful and confirmed the commitment that has been made in ensuring that those in care are listened to and empowered to effect beneficial change.

During our programme of planned induction visits to the residential units with Mr Michael Bowyer we have been impressed by the provision and care seen in each one. It has been encouraging to see the family atmosphere created in the Homes. The genuine excitement of the young people who will soon be moving to Field View and their involvement in decision making about their new Home was palpable.

We are looking forward to being allocated our specific Homes and beginning our visits, mindful of the words of one young person in care -“if you cannot ensure that I will leave your care in better condition and circumstances than I arrived, then don’t bother.”

Findings.

Brig-y-don.

Brig-y-don has six single bedrooms with two self contained bed sits. It has been recently renovated and is in an ideal situation close to the beach, with a large garden, not far from town. Despite all its obvious advantages Brig-y-don does not appear to have the feel or the same happy relaxed atmosphere that the smaller homes, have despite their own challenges, appear to have achieved.

The larger size of the home and the age range of the residents, along with the recent staff changes which were needed to accommodate the care of the new resident in one of the self contained units, may all have contributed to this situation. The Staff are friendly and professional and do their best to deal with some challenging behaviours.

In the main House, at present accommodating two males and one female, they are experiencing problems surrounding rules of healthy eating. Staff have made some concessions and are trying to accommodate the young people's desire for more flexibility at meal times, but the residents are still unhappy with this important area of their care. The Visitors from the Board are attempting to negotiate a solution in what appears to be an impasse between staff and residents.

Educationally, one of the male residents is at present attending the Alternative Curriculum. He is keen to return to mainstream school, but is unable to meet the minimum targets set to achieve this aim. This young man is intelligent and aware that he cannot achieve his full potential if he remains out of the system.

A summer holiday off Island was enjoyed by two of the young people. The third resident was refused this privilege due to continuing behavioural problems.

The admission of the resident to the self- contained unit, who has multiple emotional and physical problems, has necessitated staff restructuring within the main house and provided further challenges for the staff and young people.

Visitors Sheila Warren Anne Southern

Greenfields.

The young people visited at Greenfields are reportedly happy with the care on offer there –apart from the temporary loss of freedom which is understandable. The staff are welcoming and supportive of the B.O.V role.

There have been a few 'in house' minor issues that have come to the attention of the B.O.V., and the staff / management have dealt with them swiftly and in a professional manner. This facility offers all educational and personal needs for those in secure accommodation The B.O.V. witnessed a few young people returning to Greenfields within a three month period – which may suggest that their offending traits had not been sufficiently addressed.

From June 2012 –Greenfields has been closed therefore no visits by the B.O.V. have taken place for four months. The B.O.V. welcome the deployment of some of the Greenfields staff to outreach duties in the community with the young people who were previously in the secure unit.

Visitor Alice Chanter.

La Preference (Field View)

La Preference is a big old fashioned house in large grounds, which is due to be replaced as a care home by a move to the recently refurbished Les Chenes now re named Field View.

There has been a consistent number of between eight and nine young people aged between 15 to 18 years resident at the home during the year. They are a close knit group who enjoy each other's company and support each other. They have on each visit been welcoming, friendly and communicative with the B.O.V.

Unrest at the beginning of the year brought complaints from the young people that there were too many rules and regulations and that they were not being treated as young adults. Following consultations with Management an Independent Living Programme preparing them for leaving the care system was introduced with great success.

Problems did arise with differing financial arrangements, which resulted in two levels of financial assistance being offered to two different groups, causing feelings of unfairness. This has now been resolved but some problems remain around medical bills and the B.O.V. would like further information on this issue.

Further unrest in February surrounding the planned movement of one of the key workers, which the young people had learned about from unofficial sources. This was successfully resolved when at a meeting called at their request; they were able to clearly and eloquently explain that the reason for their improved behaviour, the settled atmosphere at the home and the dramatic change in the wellbeing of some of the residents was due entirely to the consistent staffing they were now experiencing.

The Board were concerned that a decision was made to alter this by relocating one of the main stabilising influences without consultation with the young people. On the positive side the young people were listened to, and the status quo maintained. This highlighted to the Board that key workers of the calibre of this particular staff member, must be rare, for managers to consider his redeployment to an alternative home in order to help solve problems there.

May saw genuine anxiety surrounding the planned move from La Preference to Field View. The Board visitors were active in supporting the young people in their attempts to be kept informed and more involved in plans and decisions. They are now not only resigned to the move but are positively excited about the future. Throughout this unsettling time management have responded positively to the young people and respected their concerns. The opportunity to take their pets with them and space to park their motorbikes has all helped in achieving a satisfactory result.

At each visit we have been welcomed openly and warmly by both staff and young people. The relationship and trust between staff and the B.O.V has developed well, particularly since the involvement with the Field House move. It demonstrated that the B.O.V. were fully committed to the interests of the young people and were prepared to act to support their cause.

Visitors. Louise Clarke and Nicola Santos –Costa.

St Mark's

The Board of Visitors has been warmly welcomed by the duty staff, and indeed have witnessed some positive interaction between staff and residents towards preparing them for 'independent living'. The majority of the young residents at St. Marks are a lively group of 16-18yr olds who appear to lead unpredictable lifestyles. Most residents appear to spend considerable time outside the hostel with their immediate peer groups. Unlike other young people in the residential care system, they are not obliged to turn up at specific meal times or indeed to attend in-house residents meetings. However, the BoV are pleased to report that during the past year they have been able to spend time with several young residents who have been very open about their individual challenging lifestyles. Such visits have enabled a rapport to be built up with them before they move back into independent living.

The outdated design of the St Mark's building has been recorded by the B.O. V. since our first visits. However, some improvements over the past twelve months have been made. The residents rooms and communal areas have all been redecorated which provides a more homely atmosphere for the young residents and some CCTV has been installed in the basement room. From a protection perspective, this basement area raises ongoing concern, mainly because members feel that this is the most vulnerable room in the building, and is cut-off from the main entrance level where the staff office is based. Admittedly, the CCTV now provides a monitoring platform for the staff that are located in the office level above, however the B.O.V. contend that this outdated building does not support a positive working environment for both staff and young residents on a daily basis. The lone worker policy continues to concern the B.O.V. who would appreciate further discussion on this matter, as in their opinion the 'lone worker duty' could potentially place both staff and young people at risk should an impromptu incident occur.

The B.O.V. continues to be welcomed by the St Mark's staff and residents, at different times of the day, which has enabled a good rapport to be built upon. One-to-one interaction has been limited with residents - due to the makeup of the building and some young people not being at home. However, we are pleased to report that several residents have had positive and open discussions about their future and some have managed to escape the criminal justice system and indeed make a new life for themselves – which is encouraging.

Under the new management regime the staff are observably working hard during their tight duty schedules to encourage new opportunities for the young residents. For example, educational, recreational, and work placements are all being targeted. The BoV have met several residents who have gained places on the Prince's Trust Course and in the Territorial Army and one resident has gained an apprenticeship as a chef. During a recent visit we were informed about a young female resident who has successfully completed a hairdressing course at Highlands College and is now seeking new career opportunities. Staff have introduced a new one-to-one reflective initiative. This aims to look at each resident's individual needs in order to achieve independent living, and discuss and reflect on a way forward. This key initiative has been taken up by several residents, and in the BoV opinion should be allocated extra resources and time in this crucial area. Overall the atmosphere in the hostel (of late) is very encouraging and in the past month three new residents have arrived.

The St. Mark's visitors contend that with proper investment in additional key workers and increased resources to help target the residents' individual needs, progress should be made at St. Marks. Particularly due to the daily efforts made by a dedicated ground level team. We believe such investments could provide a fundamental shift in the lives of the young people residing at St. Marks – towards a brighter future.

Visitor Alice Chanter.

Ulvik. Now moved to Casa Mia.

Ulvik is a comfortable family home where the young people can be treated as individuals and have their individual preferences for such things as outings, holidays and food met.

Initially set up as a therapeutic unit for one child, the house has accommodation for three residents there were initially some problems integrating new young people into the house. The introduction of a female as the third resident necessitated three staff to be present at all times. Some problems within the group were resolved when this young girl was able to return to her home situation. At present there are three males aged 15 years. As may be expected there are relationship issues between the boys, but the dynamics shift, and although there are problems and crises, they appear to be resolved in the time between visits, and there appear to be no ongoing issues.

A general concern is education. Two of the boys are in the Alternative Curriculum, which they are happy with, although it is a sign of problems in mainstream education and may result in them not reaching their full potential. They will have finished compulsory education at the end of the year and will need guidance regarding their futures. They can stay in the home until they are 18 years old, which they appeared unaware of. The other boy is at Les Quennevais School, but is not happy, and regularly absconding.

Members of staff are pleasant and welcoming, and appear to have good relationships with the boys, although we have noted over the course of our visits we have seen at least 12 different care workers or bank staff. There were concerns when the Ulvik lease terminated, but the transition to Casa Mia in August has gone smoothly and it is another comfortable family home with plenty of space. It is ideally situated with direct access to the beach and cycle track.

Visitors. Anne Southern and Sheila Warren.

The White House.

The White House is a therapeutic unit set up to house two very vulnerable young people now aged 16 yrs (female) and 13 yrs (male). Resident now for 3 years these two young people have blossomed in a home environment that is comfortable, spacious, clean and well maintained. In an atmosphere as close as possible to a family unit, they enjoy entertaining their friends and are encouraged to make reciprocal visits.

It appears to be a typical home with teenage tensions at times, and then a closeness that is to be applauded in the care setting. The young people are cared for and cared about by the staff. All the team appear to have a good relationship with the youngsters and are highly motivated. Birthdays and special occasions are celebrated and the staff and children are all involved in the planning of outings and holidays. Any problems that do arise appear to be surrounding school and school relationships. The girl has now left school and is embarking on a course at Highlands College. At the time of writing there are some problems surrounding the boys schooling. All the relevant organisations are working together to hopefully provide a satisfactory solution.

Overall The White House appears to be the home situation that all the residential units should be aspiring towards. The small size of the home along with the employment of permanent, as opposed to bank staff who work there goes a long way to the success of the home.

Visitor Nola Hopkins.

Concerns.

As a board we are aware that we only have a superficial view of all the numerous issues the Children's Service face, but would like to bring the following areas of concern to the C.P.G.'s attention.

- The 3 different areas of care on the one site, i.e. Greenfield Secure Unit, Field View for introduction to Independent Living, and the White House a therapeutic unit for vulnerable children.
- Lone worker policy.
- Education –under achieving and school exclusions.
- Consistency of staff in each home, and the number of Bank Staff employed.
- The use of leased homes, creating uncertainty for the children, and loses when they have to move to new premises.
- Financial difficulties for the 16 – 18 years, in particular medical expenses.
- The limited consequences available to staff to discourage challenging behaviour.
- Our name, "Board of Visitors", which is associated with the Board of Visitors at the prison.

The Board would welcome meeting with the C.P.G.to discuss these important issues in more detail, and issue an invitation to them to attend one of our Board meetings in the near future.

Future plans.

A programme of Guest speakers at alternate Board Meetings has been planned to develop an understanding of the roles of the various organisations and professions in the community whose work has an effect on the role of the Board. We are grateful to Mr Brian Heath, Chief Probation Officer who has agreed to be our first speaker.

The second group training, planned for February 2013, when completed, will enable those Board members who have expressed an interest, to visit those Respite Homes deemed appropriate by the Children's Department. The Board agrees with the philosophy that all young people regardless of their needs deserve a voice and hope to be able to offer this extension to their role in the future.

Acknowledgements.

The Board would like to acknowledge the support of the Minister of Health and her team Ruth Johnson, and Lesli Wilson at the General Hospital .The hugely successful recruitment campaign would not have been possible without their hard work.

To my fellow members on the interview panel, Mr Michael Bowyer, Mr Brian Heath and Mr Barney Gordon whose combined wisdom allowed us to recruit 16 much needed new Board members, thank you.

To my fellow Board Members whose determination to continue ,despite our dwindling numbers which meant their work doubled was impressive, thank you for your commitment to the young people and to the service.

To the J.C.P.C .for their support with training and the use of their meeting room for our Board meetings.

To Mike Bowyer and all the staff we meet on our visits who are always welcoming regardless of how busy they are.

I feel it appropriate to conclude this report with the words of the young people themselves, the reason all of us , in whatever role we perform, do the work we do.

“The Board of Visitors – Who they are, what they do, and how they have helped us!”

“The board of visitors are an independent party of individuals who come and visit youngsters within the children’s homes around the island to ensure all our needs are being met and will support us if we have any concerns or worries. The Board of Visitors visits the home on a monthly basis and sometimes come up unexpectedly – which is always a pleasant surprise. Equally, although it can be weeks until you see the BOV again, we always have the opportunity to email, text or call them whenever an issue arises within the household, or individually. The BOV will then visit the home as soon as possible or arrange an individual meeting with a particular resident who requires their support. The BOV always have a welcoming approach and understand that it takes time to build up trust and over that period of time they will take an interest into our everyday life (I.E ask about how college is going, how the children’s home is supporting us, and our we receiving all the care we should be in order to live as a suitable and safe adolescent) and they will support us in any way possible. The BOV are always very approachable, as time goes on each individual can approach them in their own way and talk about any concerns that may be bothering them – and the BOV are always prepared to help. One of the biggest issues that everyone at La Preference had, collectively, was that we were soon due to move to our new placement ‘Field View House’ (previously ‘La Chenes’) this planned move created a lot of anxiety within the household and made a lot of people unsettled as we were unsure about dates, when we would be going, and who would be going. This equally created a lot of frustration within the home and left many of us unsettled. We then called up the BOV – who responded immediately and arranged a meeting with all the residents to allow us to voice our concerns. We came up with an idea of having management visit the home on a monthly basis in order to discuss the progression on ‘Field View House’ and ease any of our worries. For every meeting at least one member of BOV would sit in and ensure we were given reasonable information and would record the information to write up minutes to give us at a later date. As these meetings continued and more information was provided to us young adults, our anxiety soon reduced and worries/concern no longer existed – this was because of the regular visits by management, arranged by the Board of Visitors.

It is all very much appreciated.”

Statistics.

January 2012 - October 2012.

	Hours.
Announced visits	49.
Unannounced visits	26.
Board meetings	96.
Travel time	47.
Report writing	48.
Seminars	84.
Additional hours	121

Total 471.

Additional hours included

Attending Secure Accommodation Order Reviews.

Attendance at Scottish Inspectorate report briefings.

Attendance at Strategic Framework meetings.

Planning meetings to develop the service.

B.O.V. Recruitment drive, Interviews etc.

Interview panel for Children's service.

Preparation of Annual Report.

Sheila Warren.

Chair person Board of Visitors.

22-10-2012.

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