

JERSEY CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

INDEPENDENT VISITORS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

ANNUAL REPORT

December 2016

Introduction:

There has been one member on maternity leave from the Board this year. The Independent Visitors for Young People (IVYP) now number fourteen.

Louise Clark (Chairperson)

Alice Chanter (Deputy Chairperson)

Lisa Le Maistre

Deborah Morris- Monro

Paul Pinel

Louise Warran

Francis Katamba

Adam Freer

Caro Tomlinson

Gerry Gray

Julia Lydford

Tyler Jeune

Sonia Tomas

Amanda Rondel

Purpose:

To visit open and secure residential units in Jersey; to meet with the children and young people; provide a befriending role and represent the views of the children and young people to help them raise issues about their life in care, and support preparations made for their progress into independent living.

Endeavour to: identify, understand and articulate any concerns and issues; discuss these at Board meetings and communicate these concerns to Children's Services.

Terms of Reference: (TOR)

Our TOR state that the IVYP has been set up under the auspices of the Children and Vulnerable Adults (CAVA) Policy Group to observe the services and care provided to vulnerable young people (YP) in the care of the States of Jersey.

Overall Review

A review of the IVYP terms of reference, role, reporting procedure and escalation policy was carried out in the early months of the year by Social policy and Children's services. The IVYP now have a very clear and comprehensive set of documents. Many thanks to Anna Hamon for her hard work and understanding of the needs of IVYP in production of these documents.

In March, the IVYP presented to the Jersey Care Inquiry a report of IVYP thoughts and concerns about residential care: their aspirations and vision of care in the future.

The report was presented by Louise Clark and Lisa Le Maistre.

Sheree Maher was appointed as the new Link Officer for IVYP monthly board meetings and has been attending since March 2016. It has been beneficial having a member of Children's services present at all meetings to provide the IVYP with the most current information, particularly the new admissions of children into care and Greenfields.

Nick Cook and Steph Faudemer of Barnardo's attended the May 2016 meeting to discuss the new residential unit - Thomas House- funded and managed by Barnardo's. Steph described her role in Your Voice, a service set up to listen to the concerns and views of young people in residential homes.

James Clarke interim Head of Residential Services left his post in the summer and was replaced by Chris Golbourn as Head of looked after Children. Chris attended September 2016 meeting, to meet IVYP and explain his vision and plans for residential services.

IVYP were very sorry to hear of the tragic death of Mike Bowyer. Mike was an inspirational dedicated and much loved part of Children's services. He has always been a strong supporter of IVYP and the need for independent review of care. He worked alongside IVYP and gave up much of his time last year interviewing and recruiting new IVYP members. He will be very much missed by IVYP and all the children that he supported.

In November, Alice Chanter, Deputy Chair resigned from the IVYP. Alice has been involved with the IVYP since it started 6 years ago and has been a dedicated member. Her tenacity and commitment to vulnerable young people in care has made her an invaluable asset. She will be very much missed and we would like to thank her for her years of service.

Residential Homes

There have been many ongoing positive changes in the residential care service. One of the recommendations of the Williamson report was to introduce much smaller, bespoke care homes rather than the larger outdated model of care. This is being implemented in Residential services with excellent effect. IVYP have seen the clear benefits to young people of the small home environment with consistent staff. Replicating as close as possible the stability of a functional parental home.

This is evident in the new Hautlieu House and refurbished Flats at Brig-Y-Don. The overall view of IVYP is that the vulnerable and often troubled young people in care respond better to stability, consistency and maintaining the same carers. They have often come from chaotic and dysfunctional homes, which can initiate the need for them to come into care. The ultimate aim of care is to establish functional self-regulated care, the ability to attend education and develop into responsible adults. This consistency of care is being better enabled by the appointment of permanent staff in the homes as opposed to bank staff previously -and by the pending appointment of permanent home managers trained and experienced to manage their particular home in a consistent way. This will be very valuable. As will the introduction of a service lead liaison member of staff between RCCOs in the homes and the senior director level of social services.

At present the link service lead is Sheree Maher who provides consistent management and leadership. The IVYP in the past frequently heard complaints from ground level staff that they did not know what was going on at higher level, there was no liaison they felt isolated and uninvolved in decision making. This is now changed for the better there is excellent communication between ground level staff and head of service. Sheree Maher also attends IVYP meetings so equally the IVYP are really well informed of activities within the care homes.

New appointments of staff deployed to Greenfields secure home has again enabled consistent care, continual ongoing involvement with young people as opposed to before where RCCO were removed from the home they worked in to temporarily cover Greenfields for a new admission. The development of the leaving care team has enabled continuation of care and support which is excellent and the retention of permanent RCCO staff in the homes allows young people leaving the service to maintain contact and support from the home as any young person would do in the private domain. Thus highlighting the need for stability in their lives.

As this model of consistent predictable care clearly works well with clear communication between all parties, it is more obvious to the IVYP when disruption occurs and the negative effect it has on young people. The fragile stability of particularly, the younger children in care is easily disrupted and their well-being deteriorates.

In every incident that has arisen as a result of placement of a young person with challenging behavior, the IVYP have been able to discuss the situation with the link officer.

She provides feedback to IVYP and clarifies the work carried out to resolve issues

Brig-Y-Don

The emergency or sudden placement of a new resident can change the whole dynamic of the house. We observe that children within a home, after time, establish a sense of security which reflects in their behavior and their school attendance etc. When an unplanned placement of a young person with challenging behavior occurs this stability can be disrupted. Children have shared to IVYP how unhappy they are with a new arrival and IVYP observe deteriorating behavior.

We have been very concerned effects observed of the admission of new placements and we questioned the suitability of the placements. The staff, despite their very best efforts, struggle to manage challenging behavior. Inevitably time is withdrawn from some young people to try and manage the new placement. The staff are really well supported by the service and have seen increased staffing levels to ensure all young people have support available to them. Recently residents have been avoiding communal areas and there has been renewed tension and disharmony in the house.

Earlier in the year there was a sense of vibrancy and enthusiasm in the house. A new garden project was started in May, which appeared to have engaged several residents. It seemed as if the project fizzled out over the summer. This project is now going to be completed by charity BYD funding.

Seaview Flat

Seaview flat has been refurbished and the residents living there are very happy with the placement. They are moving towards independent living, with the security and support of the staff. On site, this facility provides young people with a valuable stepping stone to adult life.

Brig-y-don Flat

This flat has been modernized and refurbished to create a unit to prepare older residents for independent living. The residents in the flat are making good progress and is much happier and settled in this environment. The stability of the small home and the continual one to one input of consistent staff are proven to be very effective in changing behavior and empowering the young people to mature and prepare for life as a responsible adult.

Visitors Louise Warren Francis Katamba

Field View

Field View also has been used as a last resort for placement; often the unit is not suitable for the young person in question. This has a serious impact on the smooth running of the home. The staff at Field View are extremely dedicated and nurturing they try hard to maintain equilibrium in the home and are very interactive with the young people in their

care. It appears that time spent with the new placement detracts from the input other young people have become used to, very similar to any home and as they are vulnerable can react badly.

Some residents have been using the time at Field View to prepare for future independence, while others seem not to engage in the same way. The staff support the young people in finding employment and further education, they help with transport of young people and are supportive of their activities. The staff consequently seem to be very highly thought of by the young people. They are a consistent team and experienced. Once a young person has moved on from the home usually at 18 years old they will maintain contact and support of that young person. The home is usually very settled so it is a shame when the dynamics disrupted by an emergency placement.

Visitors Lisa le Maistre Tylor Jeune Adam Freer Caro Tomlinson

Greenfields Secure Unit

There are currently YP in the facility serving custodial sentences. The care of YP is consistent and therapeutic. The educational needs of the YP appear to be well provided.

Visitors Debi Morris-Monroe Tyler Jeune

White House

The staff at the White House are very supportive of the YP and there is good consistency of care. The YP have struggled to attend education and despite the Alternative Curriculum being adjacent to the White House neither of them attend. Involvement from Education and other professionals has not resulted in participation. This is a source of frustration to staff who have tried many incentives and initiatives. The staff are very supportive and will try hard to maintain family contact and connections for the YP. Again we saw the introduction of YP to the house late in the year, which triggered violent and aggressive behaviour in the home. The staff were embattled and distressed by the changes and in the opinion of IVYP behaviour of residents deteriorated.

The proximity of the White House to Field View is not always ideal, due to the age differences between older independent young people in FV and younger residents aged 13 to 16.

The White House closed December 2016 for extensive renovation and will create a modern functional unit. The young people were fully engaged in this process this is an excellent development and will add to the growing list of high quality residences.

Visitors Caro Tomlinson and Louise Clark

Casa Mia

Casa Mia was closed as a residential home for looked after children early in the year but is reopening to provide a home for young people from the White House.

Visitors Gerry Gray Julia Lydford

Oakwell

Oakwell is an excellent example of a well thought-out building, suitable for the variety of needs of the various residents. The whole building has an open plan, warm, welcoming appearance, and the individual bedrooms are delightfully decorated with all the necessary equipment present, but not obtrusive. The IVYP feel that the sensory room and the hydrotherapy pool will, benefit the residents both physically and emotionally and give much pleasure to the young people. The IVYP visit each month and are very impressed with the level of care shown to the children that stay.

Visitors Gerry Gray Debi Morris- Monroe

Eden House

IVYP visited Eden House, which housed YP earlier in the year, they have now moved.

Hautlieu House

This is a new residential home opened in September, refurbished and equipped as a therapeutic unit. It is an exemplary home with staff appointed for the role. The home is running very well and the YP appear to be benefitting from the stable environment and consistency of care available.

Visitors Julia Lydford and Gerry Gray

Strathmore

Strathmore has a different status as a children's home as it is partly funded and managed by the Charity- Shelter Trust. The majority of the residents are not looked after children (LAC) i.e. wards of HSSD, however CAVA have requested that IVYP visit the home as it is partly funded by Social services and can house LAC. There are no LAC living at Strathmore at the current time.

Strathmore is an extremely busy home, accommodating up to 21 youngsters in 18 rooms. The project provides safe, high-support, medium-term accommodation for vulnerable young people between the ages of 16 and 25. The staff, who are on duty 24 hours a day, are always welcoming and very friendly. The IVYP continue to visit at "tea time" when most are at home.

During most visits this year, IVYP have seen a notable movement of residents, more so than usual. Some young people have moved into independent living whilst others have arrived from previous placements, which have broken down. In some cases, residents have had to leave Strathmore for breaching their license agreements. Until September 2016, Tessa Purvis acted as Interim Project Manager. Various issues have been raised with her during her leadership, which we are pleased to report have all been rapidly dealt with.

The IVYP are aware that Strathmore has a Zero tolerance approach to drug use. However, having received a copy of the Strathmore Policy, the IVYP believe that the requirements are not clear enough for the residents to fully understand.

The Strathmore building continues to be maintained to a high standard, inside and out. It always appears clean and welcoming. The new Project Manager, Werner, seems to have made a really good impression with both residents and staff since he started in late September. The IVYP are looking forward to working with and supporting him in the future.

RECOMMENDATION

The IVYP are fully aware of the importance of communication between themselves, the Shelter Trust Director, the Project Manager and staff at Strathmore and as such the IVYP would welcome periodic and structured meetings with The Shelter Trust Director John Hodge.

Visitors Alice Chanter Paul Pinel Tylor Jeune

Reflections and observations

1. The dedication and high level of care of the RCCO staff in the homes is clear. Twelve new permanent members of staff have been appointed as RCCO, which will reduce bank staff and promote continuity of care. Also, dedicated home managers and deputy managers are in the process of being appointed to each home.
2. There has been a lot of change at Director Level within Children's services with several appointments in the past 18 months. Hopefully a permanent director will remain in post.
3. The appointment of Sheree Maher as Service Lead for residential services has provided a caring and informed manager who is an excellent link between ground staff and senior management.
4. There is high turnover of Social worker staff, which can lead to lack of consistency and care. A significant number of children can see many changes of a social worker during their time in care, which they do complain about.
5. Having witnessed the great progress made in the well-being of young people in small homes with high quality consistent care, and conversely noting the disruption and regression in behaviour caused by emergency placement of troubled young people into larger homes, when staff unavoidably become overstretched - It would seem the policy of creating modern specialist small units is the right one.

The provision of an emergency placement home available where young people with behavioural issues could live when first brought into care, to provide intensive support until they settle, avoiding disrupting the progress made with those in long-term care, would seem a priority.

IVYP are told that children brought into HSSC care are assessed fully to decide where placement is best but then have no option but to place the new young people in any home that has available space even if age inappropriate and other residents will be disrupted. While acknowledging that every effort is made to manage this disruption and the well-being of new and existing young people is made a priority, the negative impact is clear and long lasting.

6. Young people in care are provided with support. However, many of them suffer from emotional problems it would be beneficial if they had rapid access to professional mental health workers. It is of course an area that is stretched in Jersey, but a recommendation would be that young people in residential care could have a dedicated counselling and psychotherapeutic professional to provide immediate and on going support.

Acknowledgements

To Anna Hamon who attends meetings provides invaluable minutes, support, advice and extensive administrative work.

Sheree Maher for attending meetings and enabling open and informative support with the concerns of IVYP.

To all members of the IVYP who continue to give their time as volunteers to assist in the protection and well-being of vulnerable young people.

Louise Clark Chairperson Independent Visitors for Young People.

January 2017.