

Briefing note: Rotherham children's residential care review – proposed consultation regarding the planned closure of St Edmund's Children's Home

1 December 2015

1. Rotherham Council is reviewing the care offered across the whole of its residential care service for young people, to ensure all those looked after by the authority receive the best possible care.
2. The Council's Looked After Children and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2015-2018 identified that too many Rotherham looked after children live in residential care and that more children need to be in a family-based placement.
3. The authority currently has four children's homes (St Edmund's and Silverwood residential care homes; the Cherry Tree children's home for young people with severe disabilities, and Liberty House, which provides short breaks for children with disabilities who live with their families). Following the closure of Woodview in October 2015 St Edmund's is one of two remaining that provide long-term care young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The maximum number of placements is six and there are two young people presently living there. St Edmund's is currently Ofsted graded 'inadequate' following an inspection in October 2015.
5. Robust management action has been taken to improve this service since the Ofsted inspection in October 2015. However, further to the intervention and despite improvements to secure the immediate safeguarding needs of the young people who live there, overall it is not delivering the quality of care that the Council expects.
6. A report to Commissioner Newsam's decision-making meeting next week will therefore propose that the Council consults on a proposal to undertake a planned closure of St Edmunds Children's Home by no later than 31 January 2016.
7. The report recommends that officers start a period of consultation during December 2015 and early January 2016.
8. Following Commissioner Newsam's decision-making meeting on 7 December, it is proposed that a further report detailing the outcome of the consultation be submitted for Commissioner's decision in January 2016.

Background

9. St Edmund's can accommodate a maximum of six young people. There are currently two young people living there, both are over the age of 16.
10. The pattern of Ofsted inspections awards four ratings at a full inspection (Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, and Inadequate). For an interim inspection, the home is measured by different grades of effectiveness (Improved Effectiveness, Sustained

Effectiveness, and Declined Effectiveness). St Edmund's had reached 'Good' in July 2014 at a full inspection, but performance began to falter and by the interim inspection of September 2014 had reduced to Declined Effectiveness. Following an Ofsted full inspection on 12 October 2015, the rating fell to the lowest rating of Inadequate. The areas of concern that led to this judgement were:

- Safeguarding practice was poor, and procedures not followed
- Analysis, evaluation and actions to address risks to young people were insufficient
- Risk assessments were outdated, and contained conflicting information
- There was a lack of information relating to 'missing from home' protocol and practice
- The kitchen areas were dirty
- Young people's health was not monitored.

11. An immediate action plan was put in place, and agreed by Ofsted on 14 October 2015.

12. Given the appointment of the interim Head of Service for residential homes who started in post shortly after the St Edmund's inspection, there was capacity to put place an intense period of management intervention from mid-October 2015 onwards. This led to the following action:

- Improvements to the way potential risks to young people are identified including updating the care plans and risk assessments of all young people
- Strengthening of management arrangements in the home
- Better monitoring of the young people's health, and improved support
- Review of the domestic cleaning schedule to address issues of cleanliness outlined in the report
- Ensuring appropriate procedures are in place to tackle bullying and ensure internet safety

13. In spite of all improvement work and management action St Edmund's has only provided limited assurance in relation to longer-term and sustainable improvement. Although there is physical capacity at St Edmund's, the Council is unable to move more children into the home because of its inability to meet the needs of young people who have more complex issues. This means the Council would have to move children out of the borough.

14. It is recommended that consultation is progressed in relation to the planned closure because the home has demonstrated an inability to consistently:

- Improve as needed
- Meet leadership and management standards at the required level
- Follow management instructions
- Record in line with regulatory standards
- Apply judgement and respond to the changing needs of the young people
- Be sufficiently attuned to the emotional needs of the children
- Meet the complex needs of children requiring residential care

15. The options which have been considered, and recommended proposal, are outlined below:

- To close the home with immediate effect. This would be distressing to the young people who currently live there, and would not facilitate the required consultation. This is not recommended.
- To continue to run the home with improvement action. As outlined the home is currently not providing a good enough standard of care and does not provide good value. This is not recommended.
- To begin a period of consultation on the proposal for a planned closure of St Edmunds children's home – this is the recommended option.

16. Legally, any proposal to close a facility requires consultation with those affected. Under the recommendation, officers will undertake consultation with the following stakeholders:

- Children and young people who are resident at the home (assisted by an independent advocate)
- Parents, carers and connected persons of the above
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- The staff employed within the home and their trade unions in relation to the potential impact of the proposal on staff groups.

17. The young people have been allocated advocates from the Rights2Rights service and the advocates will work with them to feed their views into the consultation and take up matters on their behalf.

18. Subject to Commissioner's agreement, a period of consultation will take place during December 2015 and January 2016. A further report confirming the outcome of the consultation will be submitted for Commissioner's decision by 6 January 2016. Subject to this, the planned closure would take effect on 31 January 2016.

19. The reasons for the consultation are to understand the views and preferences of the consultees on the proposal and its implementation, and to understand whether there any possible unintended consequences of the proposal.

20. For further information please contact Linda Harper, Interim Strategic Director - Children and Young Peoples Services, on 01709 334003 or linda.harper@rotherham.gov.uk