

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	11 November 2024
Report title:	Quality Assurance of Children's Homes
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	Report finalised after agenda circulation
From:	Alasdair Smith, Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the quality assurance framework for the council's children's homes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Purpose of report

2. On 18 October 2022, the council Cabinet approved a strategy to provide children's residential care in Southwark as an in-house service, managed by the children and families division of the council starting from August 2024. This decision responded to the evident need for local homes for Southwark children.
3. Cabinet delegated authority to the strategic director of children and adult services to approve operational and resourcing decisions for establishing the initial children's home and subsequent homes in accordance with the outline proposals set out in the associated Gateway 1 report.
4. Cabinet also made a resolution that:
 - "..a further report on the implementation of a quality assurance framework for residential service delivery, to include specific reference to the quality

of provision and safe and effective recruitment and retention arrangements be received by cabinet”.

5. This report is intended to fulfil this resolution and is consulting with the Corporate Parenting Committee prior to finalizing the quality assurance framework for presentation to cabinet.

What are children’s homes?

6. Children’s homes offer support and care to some of our most vulnerable children and young people. Our goal is to ensure each child in care receives the appropriate placement at the right time, making residential childcare a positive and beneficial choice for those residing in these homes.
7. According to the Care Standards Act 2004, ‘an establishment is a children’s home if it provides care and accommodation wholly or mainly for children’.
8. The Independent Children’s Home Association advocates that the term “children’s home” be protected and exclusively used for settings regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted). In this report, terms such as residential home, residential care, or children’s homes refer to facilities run by a Registered Manager and staffed by paid employees.
9. Some children find it challenging to manage the intimacy of living in a foster family or struggle with forming close attachments to adults, or they may simply not want a replacement family. For these children, it is now acknowledged that a children’s home, sometimes called residential care, can often provide excellent care.

Why are we opening children’s homes in the borough?

10. More children from Southwark currently in residential placements need to live closer to home. Local placements offer distinct advantages, including better connections with family and access to local services that support their needs.
11. There is also an identified need for improved outcomes for children from Global Ethnic Majority backgrounds. Children from these groups face significant disadvantages both in terms of their identity and education

when placed at a distance compared to their white peers. Providing local placements will help address these disparities and enhance outcomes for these children.

12. Furthermore, there is a recognised need for comprehensive support to meet the children's needs, linking into Southwark's services, including education, health, and the Police partnerships. Discussions have begun with stakeholders regarding this wraparound support (both outreach and in-reach), which will be formalised should the decision be made to source children's residential provision.
13. The council's Southwark Homes for Southwark Children (SHfSC) programme is crucial for the council's role as a corporate parent. The programme aims to increase placement availability in the borough while enhancing current services. To tackle the shortage of local residential placements, the council is backing a DfE-supported project to establish two council-operated children's homes in the area.

Our first children's home

14. The first new children's home is situated in the Peckham and Nunhead ward of the borough. Considerable capital investment from the council and Department of Education has been allocated to this building, along with extensive efforts in recruiting staff, installing fixtures and fittings, drafting policies and procedures, and arranging contracts for maintenance and data systems.
15. The children's home is nearing its opening. It is anticipated that the first residents will be welcomed in January 2025, pending OFSTED registration and successful staff recruitment.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

16. Southwark has not run a children's home for a very long time. It is therefore important that the quality of care provided, the adherence to policies and guidance is as robust as possible to ensure that children receive appropriate safe and care.
17. This report sets out in Appendix 1 the proposed quality assurance framework for the council's children's homes.

18. The quality assurance framework is based on the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 ("the Regulations"). The regulations include quality standards which set out the aspirational and positive outcomes that are expected for children's homes to achieve.
19. The regulations also set out the underpinning requirements that homes must meet to achieve those overarching outcomes.
20. The quality standards, described within the regulations, and which the quality assurance framework measures against are:
 - The quality and purpose of care standard (see regulation 6)
 - The children's views, wishes and feelings standard (see regulation 7)
 - The education standard (see regulation 8)
 - The enjoyment and achievement standard (see regulation 9)
 - The health and well-being standard (see regulation 10)
 - The positive relationships standard (see regulation 11)
 - The protection of children standard (see regulation 12)
 - The leadership and management standard (see regulation 13)
 - The care planning standard (see regulation 14)
21. The framework operationalises how we will have an overview, scrutiny and challenge of the provision to ensure it meets the regulations. The various activities highlighted in the framework extensively allow for us to measure how well we are doing to respond to all standards highlighted in the regulations.
22. The framework is also important for anticipating the risks associated with running children's homes, and providing assurance to children, staff and all corporate parents that we have a clear oversight of the welfare of children in our homes.

Policy framework implications

23. The Southwark 2030 has a commitment to a great start in life for all children and young people in the borough. This particularly has in mind those who are in care, for whom Independent Reviewing Officers are a key part of overseeing the Borough Plan commitment.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

24. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities. There will be other reports that will have considered the role of the residential home in the local community, and a location assessment would have been completed already as part of the establishment of the home.
25. The quality assurance framework is intended to improve the outcome for children and young people in residential care.
26. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, lays out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The council's [Approach to Equality](#) commits the council to ensuring that equality is an integral part of our day to day business.
27. The council's Children and Families directorate involves working closely with all relevant stakeholders and partners across the sector and collectively we are committed to upholding the responsibilities towards advocating the Public Sector Equality Duty and complying with the Equalities Act 2010.
28. The PSED enables public bodies to consider the diverse needs of groups and have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Due regard is about considering the different needs of protected characteristics in relation to the three parts of the duty.
29. The Equalities Act 2010 define the following as protected characteristics; age; disability, gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

30. The report takes account of the ethnicity, age and disabilities of children in care, as well as the racial and ethnic background of current staffing of the IRO Service and addresses these areas in light of commitments set out by Southwark Stands Together (SST).

Health impact statement

31. The report takes account of the health and wellbeing of children in care.

Climate change implications

32. None.

Resource implications

33. None

Legal implications

34. None.

Financial implications

35. None

Consultation

36. Not applicable.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark's Approach to Equality	Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services 4 th Floor, Children's and Adults' Services Tooley Street 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Tendai Murowe 020 7525 0654
https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality-and-diversity/equality-objectives		
Children's homes regulations, including quality standards	Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services 4 th Floor, Children's and Adults' Services Tooley Street 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Tendai Murowe 020 7525 0654
QS Stat Guidance (Consultation version - Formatted for Pub)		
Southwark's Borough Plan 2022-26	Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Children and Families, Children's and Adults' Services 4 th Floor, Children's and Adults' Services Tooley Street 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Tendai Murowe 020 7525 0654
Fairer, greener, safer – Southwark Council Delivery Plan 2022 – 2026		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Draft Children's Homes Quality Assurance Framework

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director, Children's and Adults' Services	
Report Author	Tendai Murowe, Assistant Director, Quality Assurance and Practice Development	
Version	Final	
Dated	1 November 2024	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director, Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		1 November 2024