

## **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**11 May 2015**

### **CHILDREN'S HOMES INSPECTION FRAMEWORK**

#### **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES**

##### **1 Purpose of the report**

To outline the new Inspection Framework for Children's Homes and the reforms to Statutory Regulations.

##### **2 Background**

###### **2.1 Reform**

In 2012 the DfE began a programme of reform for children's homes.

The first round of reforms sought to ensure that:

- children's homes are located in safe areas; and,
- children's homes and local authorities were effectively safeguarding children at risk of going missing

Revised Children's Homes Regulations were issued some of which came into effect in January 2014 and some in April 2014.

The revisions required us to make a number of changes to practice including:

- providing a location risk assessment for the children's home demonstrating the suitability of the location of the home and assessing any potential risks to young people
- adhering to revised Statutory Guidance on "children who run away or go missing from home or care" and ensuring that we have a "missing child policy"
- ensuring that all staff members responsible for the care of young people held the minimum of a level 3 diploma
- ensuring that an "independent person" visits and monitors the children's home on a monthly basis in accordance with Regulation 33 and this monitoring is reported to Ofsted

###### **2.2 Next steps**

The DfE continued to consult with Ofsted and with providers of children's homes and established that the existing regulatory framework was preventing substantial improvements in quality because:

- existing regulations for children's homes were insufficiently focussed on outcomes for children

- there was a disconnect between the regulations and the National Minimum Standards (NMS)
- the concept of “minimum standards” was unhelpful in driving up quality

### 2.3 Reforms from April 2015

The DfE see the new framework as an opportunity to move away from prescription and towards supporting professional judgement by:

- setting out in revised regulations the outcomes that children must be supported to achieve whilst living in children’s homes;
- replacing the current NMS with a “guide” to the regulations, including a set of “Quality Standards” that will explain and supplement the requirements stated in the regulations; and
- streamlining and modernising the current regulations on management and administrative processes to allow managers and staff in homes to focus on providing quality care for children

### 2.4 The 9 Quality Standards

The new Quality Standards will be added to the children’s homes regulations and the NMS will be revised to become a “guide” to the regulations. The name “quality standards” came from a desire to move away from minimum requirements (NMS) to high aspirations, reflecting the way many homes in the sector are already operating.

Each quality standard has an aspirational outcome with underpinning measurable requirements. The titles are:

- quality and purpose of care
- children’s wishes and feelings
- education
- enjoyment and achievement
- health and well being
- positive relationships
- protection of children
- leadership and management
- care planning

There is also an addition in Regulation 5 on engaging with the wider system to ensure a child’s needs are met. This is a key and welcomed change for those of us working in children’s homes as it puts some emphasis, ownership and accountability onto partners in terms of their responsibility in providing for the care of young people.

### 2.5 New Framework for Inspection

Children’s Homes will continue to be inspected twice annually:

A full inspection is carried out usually at least once annually. This inspection is conducted against the grade criteria as set out below and will result in a set of graded judgements.

An interim inspection is carried out usually at least once annually. The focus of this inspection is on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

Inspectors will investigate how the manager and staff:

- understand each child or young person's starting point
- measure success
- know they are making a positive difference to children and young people's lives
- understand and act on the strengths and areas for improvement in practice.

## 2.6 Grade Criteria

Inspectors will make their judgements on a four-point scale:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- inadequate

The new regulations and quality standards, developed by the DfE, will allow the registered person to apply their professional judgement about how they will achieve the quality standards. They will be expected to explain their practice and decision-making to inspectors, including the reasons why a particular course of action is appropriate in meeting a child's needs. A professional dialogue between the inspector and those inspected should always underpin the inspection judgements.

## 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Children's Homes have registered with "Action For Children" and "The Who Cares Trust" to be part of the The Children's Homes Quality Standards Partnerships. They will be providing us with a range of free support funded by the Department for Education to help us implement the new regulations and the Quality Standards.
- 3.2 Registered Managers will need to revise and amend (where appropriate) documentation to reflect the changes in regulations.
- 3.3 The Operational Manager for Children's Homes will need to revise and amend the reciprocal arrangement with North Tyneside for the completion of Regulation 44 monitoring visits (formally Regulation 33 visits.)

Links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-childrens-homes-framework>

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