

REPORT OF HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING

OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF CHILDREN'S HOMES

**1 Background**

- 1.1 Between 16 January and 6 May 2008, the seven mainstream homes, one for children with disabilities, and the short break unit for children with disabilities, were inspected by Ofsted.
- 1.2 Each home was given a judgement on up to six categories – the five ECM outcome areas and the general organisation of the home, though not every home received a judgement for each area. Each home was given an overall judgement.
- 1.3 There are four possible judgements for each outcome area and overall – in order, these are outstanding, good, satisfactory and inadequate.

**2 Judgements**

- 2.1 Judgements for the 9 homes are shown in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Two homes received an overall judgement of good, two satisfactory and five inadequate.
- 2.3 Of the five inadequate overall judgements, four were as a direct result of the home accommodating more children than it was registered for. In the majority of these homes, the overall judgement of inadequate was accompanied by several judgements of outstanding for the individual outcome areas.
- 2.4 The actual breaches of the homes' certificate of registration all came about because they had admitted one child which resulted in the home exceeding their registered occupancy. The circumstances for each home were:

Monument View	- One child over numbers for one night
Colombo Rd	- One child over numbers for two nights
Cotswold Rd	- One child over numbers on two separate occasions, one for ten nights, one for less than 24 hours
Revelstoke Rd	- One child for six nights

- 2.5 Grasswell House admitted one child over numbers for a period of three nights but this occurred on 26 January 2008, after their inspection. This was the last such breach of registration in any Sunderland children's home.
- 2.6 All the breaches occurred in situations of real emergency when a child was at risk of suffering significant harm and all other placement options had been explored. A professional judgement was made by senior managers in those circumstances to remove the child from a situation of risk to a place of safety.
- 2.7 Such breaches have occurred from time to time under the inspection regimes of first the National Care Standards Commission, then the Commission for Social Care Inspection, and now Ofsted. It is of note that only recently has Ofsted adopted such a robust approach to these breaches, and it is their application of the criteria which have changed rather than Sunderland's practice. Additionally, it can be argued that for a home to be awarded three ECM outcome judgements of outstanding, and then receive an overall judgment of inadequate, for admitting one child above registration for a period of six nights (Revelstoke Rd), is a disproportionate and unfair response.

### **3 Action Taken**

- 3.1 The strategy for placing children in emergency has been urgently reviewed and it is now policy that there will be no more such breaches. Each registered children's home manager has a written instruction from the Deputy Head of Children's Services confirming that they will not, under any circumstances, breach their certificate of registration.
- 3.2 Other measures have been taken to increase the range and availability of placement options in emergency situations, including:
- Continuing to provide foster carers specifically recruited to provide emergency placements
  - Implementing a planned process for procuring emergency placements from independent fostering providers
  - Embarking on a joint commissioning exercise with another local authority in the region to widen placement choice and secure better value
  - Consolidating the progress made in implementing preventative strategies and enabling more children to remain with their families with appropriate and secure support
  - Developing a fostering recruitment strategy in order to increase capacity

- 3.3 Following representations from the Director of Children's Services, Ofsted has agreed to carry out a full re-inspection of the homes judged as inadequate. In addition, a meeting has been arranged between the Ofsted area manager and senior managers within the Directorate, to discuss the issues of concern and identify effective communication pathways for the future.
- 3.4 It is of interest that there is concern within the region about the disproportionality of some of Ofsted's inspection reports in relation to breaches of regulations. In response to slightly different but related issues about emergency placements, the Director of Children and Young People's Services in Gateshead has written a robust letter to the Director of Ofsted expressing her concerns that the inspectors "demonstrate a lack of understanding...as to the circumstances in which some young people need to be placed and the nature of residential provision".

#### **4 Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Committee is invited to note the contents of this report and to receive the re-inspection reports as they become available.

#### **Background Papers**

Ofsted Children's Homes Inspection Reports as listed



*Appendix 1*

**OFSTED Inspections of Children's Homes 2008**

<b>Home</b>	<b>Date of Inspection</b>	<b>Health</b>	<b>Safeguarding</b>	<b>Enjoy/Achieve</b>	<b>Contribute</b>	<b>Economic Wellbeing</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Overall</b>
<b>Cotswold Rd</b>	04.03.08	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Not judged	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate
<b>Colombo Rd</b>	04.03.08	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Inadequate	Inadequate
<b>Revelstoke Rd</b>	19.03.08	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Satisfactory	Inadequate	Inadequate
<b>Monument View</b>	06.03.08	Good	Inadequate	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Inadequate	Inadequate
<b>Williamson Tce</b>	11.02.08	Good	Inadequate	Good	Satisfactory	Not judged	Inadequate	Inadequate
<b>Wendover Close</b>	12.03.08	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Good	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
<b>Grasswell house</b>	16.01.08	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Good
<b>Meadow Rise</b>	12.03.08	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Good	Not judged	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
<b>Sea View Rd</b>	31.03.08	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good