

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families
Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 6TH January 2011

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Young People

SUBJECT: Regulation 33 Rota

Ward: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To propose a revision to the regulation 33 rota for visits to children's homes.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 The proposal is endorsed by members

2.2 The revised rota is introduced from April 2011.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 requires visits to take place to each home by "an employee of the organisation who is not directly concerned with the conduct of the home" (Reg 33 (2)(c))

3.2 The visits should be at least monthly, may be unannounced and the visitor should

- (i) Speak to young people and employees to inform an opinion of the standard of care provided.
- (ii) Inspect the premises, the daily log of events and records of complaints.
- (iii) Prepare a written report on the conduct of the home.

3.3 Copies of the Regulation 33 reports are provided to the Registered Manager of the children's home and to Ofsted. Ofsted closely monitor this and check that visits have been done, the quality of reports produced and that any findings have been acted upon by the Registered Manager.

3.4 Guidance suggests that, in the case of a local authority, Elected Members should consider the 'desirability' of carrying out the visits to demonstrate their role as a corporate parent.

- 3.5 Authorities have a range of ways of carrying out these visits. In Halton, the visits are exclusively carried out by elected members but this has not been without its issues-
- 3.5.1 There are currently 9 Members who are CRB checked and 'trained ' to do the visits to the 3 Children's homes requiring 36 visits a year (2 children's homes and 24 visits from April 2011). Some of these Members are also part of the Climbie visits rota.
- 3.5.2 Some Members are only able to do a couple of visits a year due to other commitments which means there is a heavy reliance on just 1 or 2 Members for the majority of visits.
- 3.5.3 Where Members only do 1 or 2 visits a year this results in inconsistencies for the home and difficulties in developing knowledge and understanding for the Member.
- 3.5.4 Due to other commitments, some Members fail to do the visits and either do not inform officers or leave it very late to do so. This has resulted in visits not being completed within the month timescale.
- 3.5.5 Many visitors find the requirements of completing the report of the visit onerous which results in delays in submitting them and concerns about the quality of them.
- 3.5.6 The issue of the quality of reports and the inconsistent visiting have been raised as a concern by Ofsted in a recent inspection of one of our children's homes.
- 3.6 In order to address some of these difficulties it is therefore proposed to introduce a revised rota where visits are undertaken alternately by Members and Independent Reviewing Managers from the Safeguarding Unit.
- 3.7 This proposal ensures that Elected Members maintain their corporate parenting role and remain involved in the process but that additional oversight is offered by an experienced officer of the council. A similar model is in operation in a number of local authorities.
- 3.8 It is anticipated that, with a less frequent requirement, this system would support and encourage Elected Members to do their visits but also with a hope that they will maintain contact with one particular home & therefore develop more knowledge and understanding. They would also have sight of reports completed by officers which may help them to develop the quality of the reports they complete.
- 3.9 Independent Reviewing Managers are experienced social workers and managers who will be able to provide informed opinion and challenge to the children's homes.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The proposal is consistent with corporate parenting responsibilities and with Ofsted and regulatory requirements.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 It is believed that the quality of the Regulation 33 process will improve and will influence continued improved performance by the children's homes.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Children placed in the children's homes will continue to have their views heard on the quality of care provided and the impact this has on their ability to achieve.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

A positive experience in care will influence young people's aspirations and plans for their future.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Ensuring that Children's homes support the health needs of young people will improve their physical and emotional wellbeing.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Young people often wish to remain within their own community and the ability to do so in high quality residential provision, improves their likelihood of achieving well in all areas of their life.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

If children in care feel settled and comfortable and have their needs met within their home, they are likely to engage better in opportunities available to them and to aspire to good outcomes for their future.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There is no risk identified with the proposal.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The proposal is anticipated to improve the quality of provision for children in care and improve the life chances of this vulnerable group.

9.0 REASON FOR DECISION

9.1 The decision is required in order to ensure that the most efficient and effective system for undertaking Regulation 33 visits is in place.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED.

10.1 Consideration was given to using other officers to share this task with members but by virtue of their independence, their experience and their oversight of children in care, it was felt that the Independent Reviewing Managers were the most appropriate to be involved.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

11.1 A visiting rota is in place until December 2010 so the revisited rota would be introduced in January 2011 and would be supported by some further training.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact
Children's homes regulations 2001	DFE website	C Taylor
National minimum standards Children's Residential Care	DFE website	C Taylor
Care Standard Act 2000	DFE website	C Taylor