

Report To:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Report Title:	Update on Warwickshire County Council's Children's homes
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Recommendations

That Corporate Parenting Panel considers the information provided and discusses any areas that they feel requires further exploration.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Corporate Parenting Panel on the progress of WCC's children's homes, including purchase and status of properties, young people who have been living in Cherry Tree and how we plan to increase the numbers. Recruitment of staff, Ofsted registration and development of a fourth children's home.

Executive Summary

Chery Tree House CH1

Cherry Tree House has been operational since March 2023 and in this period has supported up to 2 young people (4 bedded Unit) 1 young person who was the first young person to live in the home has been successfully rehabilitated home to his mother's care.

The home has operated at lower than projected occupancy since going operational. This has been due to both recruitment and difficulty in matching to the statement of purpose for the home.

Staffing is now filled except for one post, so it is hoped occupancy can now increase through 2024.

Minor building works are planned for 2024 to expand the office at the home and modify the front garden of the property.

South of the County

Acorn Lodge (2 bedded home)

This is a 2 bedroomed home that will provide accommodation for children between the ages of 13-18years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This home will support children in need of stabilisation due to entering care or placement breakdown. The building work of Acorn Lodge was completed on the 10.10.2023 and the property handed over. The furnishing of the property is complete in preparation for registration. The registration paperwork has been submitted to Ofsted. But awaiting health declaration to allow Ofsted to process.

Recruitment for this home and Oak Tree House has been ongoing through the build period and is detailed in the recruitment document. There have been a number of challenges in recruiting staff in the south of the county in particular, at the current time we are in a position that once Ofsted registration is given we could open Acorn Lodge using staff recruited for Acorn Lodge and Oak Tree House, however the most pressing recruitment need is to recruit a Registered Manager who will have responsibility for both Acorn Lodge and Oak House.

Oak Tree House (4 bedded home)

This is a 4 bedroomed home that will provide longer term accommodation for children between the ages of 13-18years with emotional and behavioural difficulties This was handed over with Acorn Lodge. Due to not having a manager in post registration of this home has been delayed. The property is furnished and ready for registration. It is planned to utilise staff recruited for Oak Tree to support Acorn operationally initially until a registered manager is recruited and sufficient staff teams for both homes.

North of the County

Beechwood House (1 bed home)

This is a 1 bedroomed home that will provide accommodation for children between the ages of 8-18years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This home will support children in need of stabilisation due to entering care or if a placement breakdown.

The building work of Beechwood House was completed on the 16.11.2023 and the property handed over. The furnishing of the property is complete in preparation for registration with Ofsted.

Recruitment has gone well for this home with most vacancies filled. Staff from Silver Birch will initially support to allow the home to get fully operational upon registration.

The registration paperwork has been submitted to Ofsted. But awaiting health declaration to allow Ofsted to process.

Silver Birch (4 bedded Home)

This is a 4 bedroomed home that will provide longer term accommodation for children between the ages of 13-18years.

The building works on the property have commenced. This property is likely to be handed over in April 2024. It will then be furnished and registered with Ofsted. We have strong recruitment and have recruited well in this area.

Property number 4 (4 bedded Learning Difficulties home)

Viewings ongoing. One potential property identified. being second viewed with costings being explored to check viability.

Key Issues Across the homes for further discussion

- Recruitment of a Registered manager for Leamington homes
- Competitive salary offer, (e.g., registered manager post advertised in Oxfordshire CC is £55,783 - 59,010, in comparison to WCC recently re graded salary of £47,989 – 53,964).
- Recording systems to support evidencing progress of children and management oversight.
- ICT within the homes
- Review Statement of Purpose for Cherry Tree House
- Identification of children who can return to Warwickshire from out of county residential homes.

Conclusions

It is extremely positive that the building work has now finished on three of the properties and we were successful in the CIF bid. The recruitment campaign in the north has been successful in a competitive market, however it is evident that the recruitment of registered managers is a challenge, with very few applications and resource across the whole sector (17% of RM posts are vacant across the country). Identifying and matching children will continue to be discussed and progressed with the re-introduction of residential panels where all children who are in out of county residential will be discussed to see if they can move back to Warwickshire.

Environmental Implications

Reviewing ECP ratings of all homes to bring them to a C or below rating.

Financial Implications

CIF funding successful and will need to keep within budget for future purchases.
In the longer term we need to achieve high levels of occupancy to make the homes financially viable.

Appendices in relation to recruitment

Appendix A – Interviews

Appendix B – Successful Candidates

Appendix C – Unsuccessful Candidates

Appendix D – Staff for homes