

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting20th April 2006

1. Title of Item/Report

Review of Residential Children's Homes

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet was advised that there had been a decline in Looked After Children from 218 in 2002 to 195 in March 2006, and wherever possible the Council aimed to place children and young people within a family setting. As a consequence there had been a review of residential care provision carried out and consideration was given to the outcome of this review.

The Council currently had four Children's Homes for Looked After Children and details were provided of their current occupancy levels and operational costs. There were currently 16 young people in placement in total in the four residential homes, leaving 3 vacancies. A further vacancy was anticipated over the next month. Analysis of current residents would suggest that there were 10 young people who would require long term care, and with the exception of two, all had indicated a preference to stay within a residential setting. It was likely that two could be fostered. Five young people were likely to move on within the next year and one may return home within the same timescale. Residential placements would continue to be required for some young people, particularly those who present risks to foster carers or their families and it was clear that an intake/assessment unit at Princess Avenue would continue to be required.

Therefore it was proposed that Vulcan Way Children's home be closed and 6 medium to long-term beds in the two small homes at Rochester Road and Routledge Road be retained. This would reduce our in house residential bed base by 7 and provide a total of 12 beds. In addition, It was proposed that Princess Avenue continue as a task centred unit, providing intake facilities, assessment, remands to care and respite. An analysis of usage would suggest that a more flexible approach to offering respite care should be developed converting some beds into respite with planned interventions which could assist in maintaining children and young people at home or in family settings. Princess Avenue was the only home that could offer remand facilities and whilst there was a very

low take up, they had the flexibility to respond should we need to. Consultation with all staff and families affected by the proposals had commenced, with further meetings to be held. A total of 12 staff would be affected and all options such as redeployment, redundancy and early retirement would be considered.

The current percentage of children and young people who are looked after in residential placements was 12%. This had already significantly reduced from last year. If the bed base was reduced by 7 there would be a total of 18 children in residential placements both within and outside of the Borough. This would mean a further reduction in residential placements to 9.2%.

It was noted that wherever possible children and young people need to be placed in family settings. The Council were working to develop a range of foster care placements for those children who cannot remain with their family. These proposals recognise the reduction in overall numbers of children who are looked after by Stockton Borough Council, and release resources to invest in community based services.

RESOLVED that:-

- i) Vulcan Way Children's Home be closed.
- ii) Princess Avenue Children's Home continues as a task centred unit providing intake facilities, assessment, remands to care and respite.
- iii) 6 medium to long term beds be retained at the small children's homes at Routledge Road and Rochester Lane.

3. Reasons for the Decision

- i) There has been a decline in the number of Looked After Children. Wherever possible we would aim to place these children in a family setting, so we do not require the current number of residential beds.
- ii) The current percentage of Looked After Children in residential homes is 12%, if the bed base is reduced this would bring our percentage of Looked After Children in residential care to 9.2%. This would bring the Council into line with CSCI expectations of local authority residential provision.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected
None
5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest
None
6. Details of any Dispensations
None
7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed
By no later than midnight on Friday, 28 April 2006.

Proper Officer
25 April 2006