

Report to:	EXECUTIVE
Relevant Officer:	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Graham Cain, Deputy Leader(Children)
Date of Meeting:	10 February 2020

REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S HOME PROVISION

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the review of residential children's home provision, in particular in relation to 331 Bispham Road which has been temporarily closed since July 2019.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To endorse the results of the review of residential children's provision, as summarised in this report.

2.2 To formally confirm the permanent closure of 331 Bispham Road with effect from 1 March 2020 and to notify Ofsted accordingly.

2.3 That the property be retained within the Children's Services estate in the short term while alternative uses for the property be fully explored.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 The standard of care provided at the home was found by OFSTED to be inadequate during an unannounced inspection and a notice issued on the 25 June 2019. The young people who were living at the home at that time are now settled in alternative accommodation. Since mid-July 2019 the home has been temporarily closed. It is recommended that the home be formally closed and OFSTED informed. Alternative uses for the property that focus on supporting young people where the market is less strong could then be explored. It is not recommended that the asset is sold or leased to another provider with a view to continuing as a children's home.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

Do not close home, home will continue to be subject to inspection by OFSTED and costs incurred on staffing pending a long term outcome.

4.0 Council priority:

4.1 The relevant Council priority is: "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience".

5.0 Background information

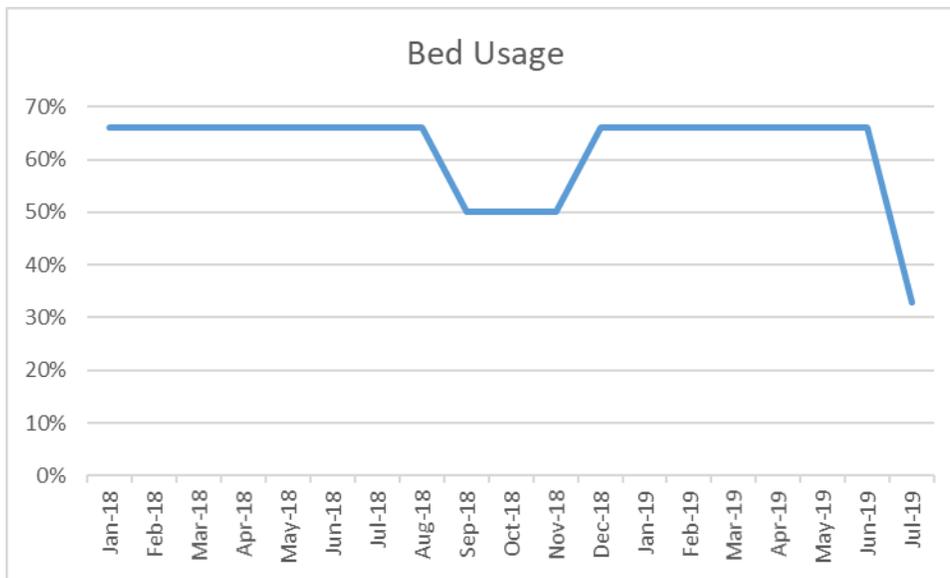
5.1 The home at 331 Bispham Road was found to be inadequate by OFSTED in their inspection in June 2019.

5.2 Immediate action was taken to safeguard the wellbeing of the residents, who with the support of their social workers and staff at the home, were able to move to new accommodation. The home was temporarily closed in July 2019. (decision PH41/2019 refers).

5.3 Blackpool Council has three residential homes for children registered with OFSTED. There is a six bedded residential home in Bispham owned and run by the Council which is the only long term residential home which was designed to provide residential accommodation for young people over 13 years old that is stable, secure and long lasting. Hornby Road is a provision which supports families with children with disabilities with respite. The Link is a provision designed to support families where there are children and young people on the edge of care to develop strategies that help them to stay together.

5.4 As a local authority, the Council increasingly seeking to ensure that children and young people are supported in a home that helps them achieve as close to normal family life as possible. The aim is to increase the proportion of our children who are placed in foster placements in local families and ensure that the Council only place children in a residential care environment when their needs cannot be met in a family home environment. Over time, it has been difficult for the home in Bispham to offer accommodation to six Blackpool children who are well matched to live together in a group living arrangement. The home has not been able to routinely meet the complex therapeutic needs of children who cannot be (at the time that a placement is sought) either be met in foster care or supported by private residential providers in the local area under the North West framework, not least because such needs can often not easily be met alongside five other children.

5.5 Locally, there are a number of residential homes in Blackpool and across the Fylde Coast. There are 70 beds (excluding Hornby Road, the Link and Bispham) available in registered homes in Blackpool. When the beds in these homes are not in use by Blackpool, they are actively marketed to other local authorities. When children are accommodated by other local authorities in Blackpool this can be impactful on other local services, for example when children are missing from home, require support from the youth justice service and/ or have complex health needs. When a residential placement is sought that could be met at Bispham, it is usually the case that one can be found in the area and within agreed framework costs. As a result, over the past 2 years and longer, the home has not been operating at full capacity. For 78% of the time, the home has been operating at 66% capacity, for 15% of the time at 50% capacity and for 5% of the time, a 33% capacity.



5.6 Irrespective of the number of beds occupied at the home the base costs to the local authority are static. At full capacity the cost based on current staffing levels per bed per week is just over £2,000 per week. This compares favourably to similar placements in the private sector locally. At 66% capacity, the cost per bed per week is just over £3,000 per week. This is close to the average market placement cost for our current looked after cohort, but this figure includes young people who are complex and have high placement costs – whose needs could not be met at 331 Bispham Road. At 50% capacity the cost per bed per week exceeds £4,000 and at 33%, £6,000. These figures exclude any overspends in the budget.

5.7 The market has developed significantly in recent years, and the provision of support within a family setting with enhanced interventions mean that children who would traditionally have struggled to find and settle in a foster placement can now be supported in specialist placements. These placements are provided at a cost of

between £1,000 and £1,200 per week, and, when they work well, offer stable family homes for children who have experienced and continue to experience the effects of neglect and trauma. We are seeking to further develop this market in and around Blackpool and expand significantly the provision of foster care directly commissioned with families by the local authority.

The home does not lend itself well to a modern group living environment for young people. The Service Manager for the service has expressed concern that significant structural change would be required in order to create an environment where children and young people could be best supported.

5.8 **Outcomes**

Over the past 19 months, five children have left the home at Bispham. One of these children went on to live in semi-independent living which would be a positive next step toward independence. Four children had to leave the home and move to another residential placement more able to meet their needs, suggesting that a core aim of providing stable long term placements that end only for a child or young person to be reunited with their family, move in to more independent living or leave a group home environment to live with a foster family is not met in most cases. It should be noted that these were not short term placements with a view to moving on, the average length of stay across this cohort has been 406 days.

5.9 **Demand**

There have been 32 requests to the placement search team over the past 8 months (Jan to August 2019) for children over the age of 13 seeking residential based support. This is an average of 4 per month. Most searches are initiated because of problems at an existing placement, some of which are resolved without the need for a move. In some cases, alternative placement types, such as foster care, are secured. In all cases where residential care was sought, a placement has been secured. Removing the internal provision has not impacted on the ability to secure standard residential placements in the market.

5.10 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

6.0 **List of Appendices:**

6.1 None.

7.0 Legal considerations:

7.1 None.

8.0 Human resources considerations:

8.1 Staff will be supported through the redeployment process in to other positions available across Children's Services supporting children, young people and families. There would be 11 staff impacted by this change.

9.0 Equalities considerations:

9.1 Equality Impact assessment has been completed.

10.0 Financial considerations:

10.1 The home, while not operating, is incurring costs in staffing, who are currently temporarily redeployed across the service. This cost will reduce as these staff are supported in to alternative employment. Redeployment will initially be concentrated on roles that have the potential to reduce placement demand. Any staff savings from natural wastage will also be redirected to services that can help reduce placement demand.

11.0 Risk management considerations:

11.1 Financial risk of not closing the home – ongoing costs will add to cost pressures in Children's Budget. There is significant reputational risk to operating a home deemed inadequate,

12.0 Ethical considerations:

12.1 The Council would not currently be running any internal long term residential care provision. Short term provision remains within the Council's portfolio.

12.2 Fewer than 20% of children's homes is run by a council and according to OFSTED more than a quarter of councils in England have no provision of their own within their boundaries. Blackpool Council would continue to be a council running their own provision despite this proposed change.

12.3 In some areas, the provision of long term residential care within the boundaries of the Local Authority does not meet demand. In these areas there is an argument for Councils to run small, family like, homes to provide long term support. This is not the case in Blackpool, where the number of beds available exceeds local demand. This is resource is currently meeting the needs of other local authorities who are placing at a

distance.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Impacted staff are in formal consultation.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

15.0 Key decision information:

15.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 17/2019

15.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

16.0 Call-in information:

16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: 30 January 2020 Date approved:

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1

19.0 Executive decision:

19.1

20.0 Date of Decision:

20.1

21.0 Reason(s) for decision:

21.1

22.0 Date Decision published:

22.1

23.0 Executive Members in attendance:

23.1

24.0 Call-in:

24.1

25.0 Notes:

25.1