

Dear colleague,

It is just over a year since I was appointed to be chair of the Residential Care Leadership Board (RCLB). I'm writing to update you on the progress we have made over the last 12 months, to provide an overview of the 2019 RCLB work programme and set out how the RCLB will fit into the newly created National Stability Forum.

I have spent my time immersing myself in the sector, visiting homes, projects and engaging with providers and commissioners across local government and health. This has helped me to develop an understanding of the current issues, which I've used to inform the work programme. I've spoken with many of you and visited provision across the UK; recently the Family Learning Intervention Programme run by Hackney Council using a property in Oxfordshire, who work with young people on the edge of care and their families where there is a risk of family breakdown; the Kibble Group in Paisley who have a longstanding integrated model of care encompassing elements of secure, open residential, fostering and work experience programmes for care leavers; Care in Mind in the North West who work with extremely vulnerable young people usually transitioning out of secure CAMHS into open residential provision; attending the South West managers forum in Newton Abbot to hear about issues affecting their local home managers and discuss Regulation 44 visits and many more conversations and meetings with practitioners and experts in the residential sector.

Across all of these settings and conversations it has become clear that the young people we are talking about have experienced many or all of the aspects of residential provision; residential schools, children's homes, secure children's homes, Young Offenders Institutions, Secure Training Centres, Tier 4 CAMHS settings, often transitioning between different provision. In each part of the sector, providers have made clear that the needs of these young people have become more complex and challenging and some are struggling to provide for their needs effectively. This is particularly the case in the secure sector, but mental health needs are a challenge in each sector. It seems we respond by creating new types of provision, without sufficiently defining the needs we cannot effectively meet currently. I have now reached a stage where I have been able to propose a way forward to DfE consistent with what it is seeking to achieve - a holistic approach to the placement of children requiring residential care.

I was asked to focus on two key areas of Sir Martin Narey's 2016 Review of Residential Care, Commissioning and Staying Close. In both these areas local authorities and the voluntary sector are testing new models of provision funded through the DfE Innovation Programme. It is too early to draw any conclusions from this work, the final evaluation reports are due in March 2020, but I have included an update on each of the Staying Close and Residential Care projects at Annex A.

Expanding Capacity in the Secure Welfare Estate

A key priority in my work with the RCLB was increasing capacity in the secure welfare estate with demand far outstripping available beds needed to care for some of the most vulnerable young people in care. Depriving a child of their liberty is never a decision taken lightly, so once a court order is granted it is imperative that there is sufficient provision available, not only to keep a young person safe, but also to provide some stability to often chaotic lives. There is also a need to develop the transition out of secure care and create more effective resettlement in the community by ensuring that young people's education, health and care needs are met when they move on.

To take steps to alleviate these capacity issues, DfE has provided funding to Barking and Dagenham, North Yorkshire and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council to conduct feasibility studies into opening

new secure welfare provision in their region. Feasibility studies are due to complete in March 2019. DfE and I will assess each proposal to consider whether further funding should be allocated to take projects through to the next phase of development. I see the RCLB as key to linking up thinking across government departments, their agencies and key partners so we can think differently about the future of secure provision.

I look forward to supporting the projects as they progress and sharing updates with you later in the year.

RCLB Work Programme 2019

I've said previously that now is the time for action, not further review, and we are proposing a practical RCLB work programme with this in mind. We propose to focus on the following objectives throughout 2019, which will be discussed at the National Stability Forum meeting in March:

- Develop a vision for the future of secure care, working with the sector to develop new models for secure provision, supporting the development of joint commissioning arrangements for secure children's homes placements and monitoring the development of secure schools.
- Provide seed funding for testing new commissioning ideas in open residential children's homes, with a focus on partnership models with providers and LAs working together rather than the technical aspects of commissioning.
- Support the DfE in gathering data and qualitative information on the reasons for and scale of placements in unregulated settings.
- Engage with residential providers, with a specific focus on the largest providers, and consider how we can develop stronger relationships with them to support innovation in the sector.
- Advise DfE on options for central government oversight to make sure the market is sufficiently resourced and providing good services and value for money for local authorities
- Oversight and scrutiny via formal meetings and recommendations on progress of Staying Close and Commissioning Innovation Programme Projects.
- In capacity as board member of the National Stability Forum, invite proposals for improving commissioning and sufficiency of foster placements. We will be funding local authorities to develop models for improving commissioning and sufficiency of foster placements, including specialist placements, models that create and strengthen the links between fostering and residential, and increasing local sufficiency by working in partnership.

National Stability Forum

The National Stability Forum (NSF) has been established with the aim of improving stability for children across the spectrum of care, regardless of whether children are in residential homes, with foster parents, adopted or under special guardianship. The NSF will bring together sector leaders and experts to promote stability and encourage taking a national approach to improving outcomes for all children in care.

The NSF is chaired by the Director General with responsibility for children's social care at DfE, Indra Morris. Alongside myself, the other members of the NSF are Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, Stuart Gallimore, ADCS President, Andrew Christie, Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board and Mark Owers, co-author of the Foster Care in England Report.

I've agreed with the NSF that the RCLB has a role in continuing to support reform in residential care but that we also need to stop thinking about the range of care placements in silos and instead think about what is needed to achieve stability for young people and improve their outcomes.

As always, I welcome your feedback on this and look forward to continuing the dialogue with you all so please do get in touch at rclb@education.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Alan Wood CBE
Chair, Residential Care Leadership Board

Annex A – Update on Innovation Programme Pilots

Residential Care Pilots

Essex, Norfolk and Hertfordshire are developing **Inside Out**, a programme in which young people on the edge of secure care work with a coach in order to achieve positive change through relationship-based, solution-focused interventions. Inside Out has been live in Essex for six months and has seen promising early results; one of the young people in the cohort has been able to step-down from residential care to a foster care placement. The programme is expected to launch in Norfolk and Hertfordshire in April this year.

The **North East London Commissioning Partnership** is creating new residential capacity within the sub-region by block contracting up to 35 beds from a consortium of local providers. The project is now at the procurement stage; bids for the contract are being evaluated in consultation with a reference group of young people in care in the sub-region. It is expected that the new provision will be operational this September, allowing young people currently in placements outside the sub-region to be relocated.

The **South London Commissioning Programme** is a group of 8 London boroughs that are jointly developing an integrated commissioning solution for residential and foster care. The commissioning solution is being produced in partnership with Link Maker and is based on a specification co-developed by local authorities, young people and providers. It is expected to be ready for use by October 2019.

Staying Close Pilots

The **Break Charity** is offering 70 young care leavers across Norfolk and Cambridgeshire the option to stay close by living together in two to three bed 'moving on' accommodation. The project remains on track on referrals and property finding. Strong relationships with the local authorities and Peterborough have recently joined the project. Supporting additional needs for young people through personal budget support.

Portsmouth LA is taking forward **The Aspiration Project** by developing accommodation adjacent to an existing residential unit, and a separate five-bed house to accommodate care leavers. Offering continuity of care, practical and emotional support and sustained relationships. The project continues to operate at full capacity. There is clear evidence of multi-agency working across several partners, while strategic buy-in across partners remains strong.

North Tyneside are developing provision for six young people who are leaving care, in co-located semi-independent accommodation. Developing 'trainer' flats in the community to give young people the opportunity of trying out living independently before being responsible for their own tenancies. Supporting additional needs for young people through personal budget support.

Suffolk LA is providing a support package to young people in four of Suffolk's local authority residential care homes and three private sector care homes. The commitment of the Project Lead to

bring diverse parties together to draw on their respective experience to support care leavers is impressive.

North East Lincolnshire LA is providing an offer for young people in North East Lincolnshire's local authority children's homes the option to 'Stay Close', providing a holistic, coherent and integrated pathway for the 18+ cohort. This project is particularly strong on the importance of strong, trusting and continuing relationships with young people and children's home staff as a fundamental element of this approach.

Fair Ways is providing a secure, four-year accommodation pathway with support for young people making the transition from residential care. This will start with an initial placement in semi-independent accommodation followed by a move into an independent tenancy, whilst maintaining key relationships throughout the whole process.

Bristol LA is taking forward a project which includes co-design with young people and a variety of professionals at all stages. Phase 1 involves ongoing support from the residential Children's Home staff who have established relationships with the young people, and the local authority to have a guaranteed offer of accommodation for young people leaving care. Phase 2 of the project involves developing inter-authority arrangements and protocol to support care leavers placed out of the local authority. Phase 3 involves learning and evaluating and building a model of sustainability.

St Christopher's are providing semi-independent accommodation for six young people who are leaving care; plus 'pop-home' opportunities for young people to return to their former children's home at crisis points. The project includes specific support to help young people experience improved emotional health and well-being, plus peer support programmes to help young people develop the knowledge and skills for independent living.