

Children's Home Briefing (Hadston site proposal)

Nov 2020

OVERVIEW

As a local Authority and as a community we are the Corporate Parent for Looked After Children, children who cannot be cared for by their parents and families. There are many complex reasons a child becomes looked after. The majority of the children becoming cared for by the Local Authority are not created by the children; they are unable to be cared for by their parents or families due to a myriad of complex family challenges and need social care involvement to be safe.

Northumberland County Council's proposal and application to expand the capacity of their existing Residential homes group, is to support the growing need for children to be cared for in a well-resourced and managed residential placement, and to offer children a home within their home County. The aim of our residential services is for young people to engage in therapeutic work with a well trained residential team in preparation for a possible move to fostering or return to family arrangements other than Local Authority care.

The project has been well researched and thoughtful consideration given to where a home could or should be situated. The project has taken over two years to reach the planning application stage as many areas did not meet the safe care criteria of caring for children. Part of the consideration was to ensure that the right location with the right community was identified.

The village of Hadston was chosen for the welcoming surroundings, the good transport links which would allow children to maintain their education placements, to offer an opportunity for children to grow and develop within a small and established village with good amenities. The area was very much respected as family friendly and has a safe living status with low crime or anti-social behaviour recorded. It is a place where we would want our children to live and develop into strong community champions. This is an area we would choose, and many do to raise their own children. As Corporate parents we are required to look at the best outcomes for Looked After Children and Hadston Village offers that opportunity.

The site chosen allows NCC to create a bespoke home, set apart from any existing residential homes and within its own ground boundary.

The proposal is for a bespoke 4 bedded home which will blend into the current community setting. The operational model requires approximately 12.5 FTE staff including the Registered Manager to operate the required 24 hr, 365 days rota, and day to day care arrangements for the children. The home will be registered with Ofsted to accommodate 4 children aged between 6 - 17 years, all admissions will be risk assessed and matched as a family. There is no intention for a group of 16 -17 years olds to be admitted or that any child/ young person's safety is compromised through the matching process. The match also includes impact on the local community from and to the child/ren referred

Young people are **not** placed through the criminal courts.

Drivers for Change

NCC has seen an increase in the number of looked after children since March 2011 and we have had to place more young people in out of county placements where we would want to place them within Northumberland. The rate of children looked after in Northumberland is still the second lowest in the region but there remains a national shortage of sufficient placements particularly for teenagers. Generally, children in care generally do well in Northumberland, educationally and emotionally and the proposed building of this home is part of increasing our capacity to meet their needs.

Community data

- There are six foster care families living in Hadston, caring for 11 children aged 1 -17 years
- There are no incidents of disturbance reported involving our looked after children
- NCC manages 6 children's homes currently three within school sites. There are no incidents within their communities leading to police involvement or community disharmony
- All young people within our Homes attend schools/education within Northumberland
- A number of the children attend local community group such as Brownies and sport clubs

Aims

1. To improve choice and capacity for children living outside the care of their family
2. Develop community relationships to support Northumberland children looked after
3. Ensure children are placed nearer to home in Good or Outstanding Homes
4. Create local employment opportunities

Opportunities

1. Create greater opportunities for young people to live and learn in their own communities, and to develop into confident adults
2. Contribute to the local community
3. Work in partnership with local groups such as schools, voluntary agencies, activity groups, direct neighbours
4. Maintain funding within our county and the council

Karen MacDonald

Senior Manager

