

Witness Name: Nigel Minns

Statement No: 7

Dated 22 October 2020

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

SEVENTH WITNESS STATEMENT OF NIGEL MINNS
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR, PEOPLE DIRECTORATE IN HIS
STATUTORY ROLE AS DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Nigel Minns, will say as follows:-

1. I am Strategic Director at Warwickshire County Council (“the County”). My current post also includes the Statutory Director of Children Services and Adult Social Services’ responsibilities and line management of the Director of Public Health. This is the seventh witness statement that I have prepared in this matter. This witness statement addresses a question asked by Ms Hill, Counsel to the Inquiry, during my live evidence on 25th September 2020. This was then asked by virtue of a Rule 9 statement request dated 14th October 2020.
2. I was asked what reporting procedures are in place to inform receiving authorities or police outside of Warwickshire in circumstances where an out-of-county placement child is recorded as missing i.e. a child who is from Warwickshire but is placed out of the county.
3. Paragraph 77 of my first statement provides detail of our commitment to conducting our own RHIs for Warwickshire children in care going missing from out of county placements and the occasional circumstances where this may not be practical. For those occasions, we negotiate for a RHI to be conducted by the host authority on our behalf and check to make sure this has been done and a copy shared with us. We

provided the Inquiry with examples of conducting such interviews within the statement.

4. Looking at the data provided for 2018/19, it shows that our success for completed RHIs with children placed out of county (53%) is actually slightly above that for children in care placed locally in Warwickshire (50%) which clearly details our commitment to the national guidance, that is, we offer the same service regardless of where the child is located, keeping out of county children in sight and mind.
5. We also offer RHIs for other local authority children that we are hosting in Warwickshire and I provided examples of where we have done so in my first statement.
6. I have not yet explained to the Inquiry what the process is for receiving consultation or information about missing episodes for Warwickshire children placed out of county. We receive reports from the local Police force to whom the report is made. This is in addition to reports that we should receive as per our agreement with the placement provider/carer to EDT/Duty and subsequently onto the CE & Missing Team (which enables us to chase the local Police if a missing report has not been received). There are occasional problems with a breakdown in this notification process, notably when the placement provider/carer has failed to notify EDT/Duty, which is addressed directly with the provider to rectify this.
7. We have a strategy in our sufficiency policy to seek to place children, as far as possible, in Warwickshire or as close to Warwickshire as possible. We recognise the risks associated with placing children away from their home, school, family and community.
8. The Care Planning, Placement and Care Review Statutory Guidance updated in 2013 sets out the duties on a local authority to notify other local authorities if they place a child in care within their area. We take these duties seriously and have sent letters to local authorities when we have not received a notification about a child placed in our area (which is a regular occurrence) and we periodically review a sample of children in care in Warwickshire to ensure all relevant notifications have been completed.
9. There is also a requirement under the same statutory provisions for children's homes to notify their host local authority when a child is placed with them by another

authority. This works well and acts as a second net for ensuring notifications are sent. This is not the same for children placed in foster placements. In my view, it would be helpful if the statutory requirements were extended so that Independent Fostering Providers and Local Authority Fostering Providers also have a duty placed on them to notify their host local authority when a child is placed with them by another authority.

10. We have a procedure which is regularly updated to ensure up to date guidance and good practice is followed. **[Exhibit NM/114: Out of area procedure for staff in Children and Families]**
11. Where it is proposed that a Warwickshire child in care is placed more than 20 miles from their home address, agreement must be sought from the Assistant Director (who has delegated authority from the Director of Children’s Services). This is provided for in the procedure, and the form has to be completed to ensure agreement and that a rationale has been set out. **[Exhibit NM/115: Out of Authority Approval Form]**
12. We have developed our own form for sending notifications to other authorities. This details any risks of child sexual exploitation or risk of going missing. The form also includes information about the child’s health, education and other relevant information which may assist the hosting local authority. **[Exhibit NM/116: Notification of Placement or Change of Placement of Children in Care within the Area of Another Local Authority Form]**.
13. A report is provided to the senior leadership team and myself as the Director of Children’s Services on a 6-monthly basis; we look in detail at out of county placements and review performance, and the number of out-of-county placements forms part of our monthly performance data.
14. Paragraph 100 of my first statement details the number of Warwickshire children placed out of county assessed as at risk of CSE during 18/19 – 33 children.

The contents of this statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed:  **Nigel Minns, Strategic Director – People Directorate**

Dated: 22.10.2020