

**Glasgow City
Integration Joint Board
Finance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

Report By: Karen Dyball, Assistant Chief Officer, Children's Services

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**Children's Residential Services -
Care Inspectorate Activity**

Purpose of Report:

To provide the IJB Finance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of Care Inspectorate activity in relation to directly provided Residential Children's Services in the City and update the committee on developments in the past year.

Background/Engagement:

The report customarily focuses on the activity in relation to the work of the Care Inspectorate and the regulation of the Children's Houses. This report focuses on the 9 most recent inspections for services.

Governance Route:

The matters contained within this paper have been previously considered by the following group(s) as part of its development.

HSCP Senior Management Team ☐
 Council Corporate Management Team ☐
 Health Board Corporate Management Team ☐
 Council Committee ☐
 Update requested by IJB ☐
 Other ☒
 Children's Services Governance
 Social Work Professional Governance Board

Recommendations:

The IJB Finance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- a) note the findings of this report in respect of care inspectorate grades awarded to provided children's houses;

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	b) note the ongoing use of key question 7 to support inspection processes within children's residential services; and c) note information relating to service developments and challenges, and future developments.
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Relevance to Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan:

Children's Residential Services are key to delivering the transformation programme for Children's Services, designed to strengthen the local infrastructure to deliver a preventative strategy in the City. The Children's Houses are integral to the IJB's strategy for delivering high quality care and effective outcomes for the city's most vulnerable children and young people. They ensure that children and young people can be cared for away from home within the city boundary without the need for them to be placed in out of authority placements. Not only is this part of delivering the IJB Strategic Plan, but a critical service in terms of delivering *The Promise* in Glasgow, which outlines the recommendations of the Independent Care Review.

Implications for Health and Social Care Partnership:

Reference to National Health & Wellbeing Outcome:	Outcome 1: People are able to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing and live in good health for longer. Outcome 3: People who use health and social care services have positive experiences of those services, and have their dignity respected Outcome 4: Health and social care services are centred on helping to maintain or improve the quality of life of people who use those services Outcome 7: People using health and social care services are safe from harm Outcome 9: Resources are used effectively and efficiently in the provision of health and social care services.
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Personnel:	None
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Carers:	None
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Provider Organisations:	None
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Equalities:	None
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Fairer Scotland Compliance:	None
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Financial:	None
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Legal:	None
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Economic Impact:	None
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Sustainability:	None
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Sustainable Procurement and Article 19:	None
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Risk Implications:	Inspections may highlight areas of weaker practice, impacting the quality of care or outcomes achieved for children and young people being supported within residential services.
Implications for Glasgow City Council:	Care Inspectorate gradings for children's houses managed by Glasgow City Council/Health and Social Care Partnership have a direct impact on the public perception of the Council, and consequently the Health and Social Care Partnership.
Implications for NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde:	None.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To provide the IJB Finance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of Care Inspectorate activity in relation to directly provided Residential Children's Services in the City and update the Committee on developments over the past year.

2. Background

- 2.1. Glasgow City has 18 children's residential houses that care for 142 children and young people between the ages of 4 and 21. There are 483 care staff employed across the houses.
- 2.2. This report focuses on the activity in relation to the work of the Care Inspectorate and the regulation of the children's houses from January to December 2025.
- 2.3. Inspections of Children's Residential Services are underpinned by the Quality Framework for Care Homes for Children and Young People and School Care Accommodation. The framework consists of 6 key questions:
- How well do we support children and young people's well-being?
 - How good is our leadership?
 - How good is our staff team?
 - How good is our setting?
 - How well is our care planned?
 - What is our overall capacity for improvement?
- 2.4. From 1st April 2022, a new key question 7 was introduced,
- How well do we support children and young people's rights and well-being?

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2.5. Key question 7 has 2 quality indicators:

- Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life.
- Leaders and staff have the capacity and resources to meet and champion children and young people's needs and rights.

2.6. This additional question was introduced:

- as part of the care inspectorate recovery plan, to ensure that annual inspections of services are undertaken
- to produce a more regulatory footprint
- to prioritise the quality of relationships experienced by children and young people in line with the aspirations of *The Promise*
- to support engagement with more children and young people by enabling more services to be inspected.

2.7. A six-point scale is utilised to evaluate performance across all quality indicators during inspections:

Grade	Description	Definition
1	Unsatisfactory	Major Weaknesses – urgent remedial action required
2	Weak	Important weaknesses – priority action required
3	Adequate	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
4	Good	Important strengths
5	Very good	Major strengths
6	Excellent	Outstanding or sector leading

More detail on the inspection framework can be found at:

<http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/inspections/new-inspections>

2.8 Promise Assurance Inspections

From April 2025 – October 2025, the care inspectorate piloted an alternative model of inspection for well-performing services. A well-performing service is defined as a service which has received a grade of Excellent (6) or Very Good (5) within the last 2 years and has a SAT score of either low or medium. This means that only services within these criteria can be considered for a Promise Assurance Inspection. All other services, out with these criteria, are inspected using Key Question 7.

Promise Assurance Inspections, in comparison to a full inspection, focus on the lived experiences and outcomes of children and young people, and aims to support a shift in quality assurance away from compliance to collaborative improvement.

The purpose of the Promise Assurance Inspections is to:

- see young people in services more often, allowing them to build stronger relationships with them and their carers.
- examine the key Promise foundations which uphold and promote children and young people's rights and publicly report on them.

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- be quicker and more pro-active in identifying potential risks to good outcomes for children and young people.
- make scrutiny more proportionate to the performance of better performing services.
- further strengthen partnership working with services to achieve the shared goal of delivering The Promise.

- 2.9 Due to the nature of this type of Inspection, a Promise Assurance Inspection can only confirm that the service continues to perform at the level confirmed during the last full inspection. This means that a service grade cannot be increased during this type of inspection, even if improvements are identified.
- 2.10 In the event that the service is found to be performing at a level lower than that which was previously assessed, a decision can be made to change the methodology of the inspection. At this point, the service would be inspected using Key Question 7 and downgraded to reflect the current performance level.
- 2.11 Whilst Glasgow services were not included in the initial pilot, the pilot was extended in November 2025 which saw the introduction of Promise Assurance Inspections within Glasgow's Residential Houses. Details of all inspection activity is below.

3. Care Inspectorate Grades & Analysis

- 3.1. During the inspection period, eight inspections of children's residential services were concluded.
- 3.2. At the beginning of 2025, the Care Inspectorate had an allocated team of three inspectors for Glasgow's Children's Residential Services who had been overseeing activity in Glasgow City since April 2022. A fourth Inspector was introduced to the team at the end of 2024.
- 3.3. Further changes within the care inspectorate this year have resulted in further changes to the inspection team. Three new inspectors have been introduced for Glasgow, with one inspector remaining for continuity.
- 3.4. Historically, the service has engaged intensively with the care inspectorate to help them understand Glasgow's model and the journey of improvement that the service has been on since 2020. This included quarterly meetings between the inspectors, their line managers, and the residential service managers. This work will continue with the newly appointed inspectors to support vision setting and continuity in inspection.
- 3.5 The table below outlines the grades awarded by the Care Inspectorate for eight residential services delivered by Glasgow City HSCP, where an inspection was concluded during the reporting period 1st January – 31st December 2025.

Date	Type of Inspection	House	Grade	Previous Grade
06.05.25	Key Question 7	Newlands Rd	5	3
29.05.25	Key Question 7	Hinshaw St	4	3
17.06.25	Key Question 7	Norse Rd	4	3
11.07.25	Key Question 7	Milncroft	5	5

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23.10.25	Key Question 7	Wallacewell	5	5
19.11.25	Key Question 7	Crossbank	5	4
02.12.25	Promise Assurance	Netherton	5	5
11.12.25	Promise Assurance	Main St	5	5

- 3.6 Of the 8 inspections that took place, 6 services received grades of ‘very good’, with 4 of the services maintaining grades of 5 and the other 4 services seeing an increase in their grades to either ‘good’ or ‘very good’.
- 3.7 No requirements were identified in 7 out of the 8 services, and the themes from these reports reflected the work undertaken by the services to improve and enhance support for children and young people living in the houses. An action plan has been produced for the service where actions were identified to address areas for improvement, and all actions have been completed within timescale.

4. Key Themes from Inspection Reports

- 4.1 Key themes have emerged from inspections that are consistent across a number of services. These demonstrate the strengths within children’s residential services, and their readiness to deliver on *The Promise* agenda for change.
- 4.2 Key themes include: the delivery of consistent, relational and trauma-informed care, effective work with partner agencies that supported young people to achieve positive outcomes, effective work with families that supported positive relationships, (in some instances enabled young people to return home), prioritisation of young people’s mental health, restraint reduction, and a strengthening of children and young people’s voice and participation in the planning of their care.
- 4.3 Common themes also emerged in relation to areas of development for services including: the matching of children and young people into services, the size of the houses (their misalignment with the Care Inspectorate design guidance).

For those services who were previously on lower grades, the focus is on sustaining the progress made and further embedding the model of care into practice.

- 4.4 The enactment of the Health and Social Care (Staffing) Act 2019, in April this year, placed a duty on services to ensure adequate staffing levels commensurate with the level of need of the children and young people being supported. Prior to the enactment, the service had undertaken a review of staffing due to ongoing operational challenges. The review was completed in 2025 with the support of finance and HR, culminating in an increase in investment for the service.

5. Key Service Developments and Challenges

- 5.1 Glasgow has been very successful in reducing the numbers of children and young people coming into care through investment in robust family support services. When children require residential care, their profile is often more complex, with the prevalence of neurodivergence increasing.

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- 5.2 The services typically operate at capacity. To increase the opportunity to match children's needs to vacancies we need to continue to reduce the number of accommodated children.
- 5.3 The current design of 8 bedded children's houses is incongruent with the care inspectorate design guidance on care homes which, in line with *The Promise*, stipulates that children's houses should provide care for a maximum of 4 children. This means that 17 of the 18 children's houses have twice as many children and young people residing within them as is recommended. This, alongside the increase in complexity, presents ongoing challenges with placement matching.
- 5.4 The service has experienced a significant change in the age demographic of children being referred for residential placement. Traditionally, residential houses provided support for young people aged 12 plus, however, a national shortage of foster carers has seen an increase in referrals for children as young as 4. This presents challenges including staffing skill set, group dynamics and environmental fit.
- 5.5 The service requires to provide care for young people with increasingly complex needs in relation to neurodivergence, mental health, trauma, and young people who present a high risk to themselves and others. This is becoming increasingly challenging as the service seeks stability and continuity of care for young people with more complex needs.
- 5.6 Residential services continue to provide vital support in relation to looking after young unaccompanied asylum seekers who come to the city. Often the initial response to caring and assessing their needs is in a residential setting. In conjunction with the city's Asylum Team, assessment and support is currently provided to 7 unaccompanied children and young people accommodated on an emergency and unplanned basis.
- 5.7 The introduction of the model of My Meetings, delivered by independent reviewing officers (IRO's) has greatly enhanced both the voice and participation of children and young people in the planning of their care, and this is increasingly identified during inspections as a key strength.
- 5.8 The service continues to support the integration of the *Nurture Framework*, a trauma-informed model of care that emphasises the importance of relationships and secure attachments for healthy child development. This is an evidence-based model of care that has been utilised within schools in Glasgow for over 10 years, and In Children's Residential Services for the last 4 years.
- 5.9 Implementation of the model has been achieved with the support of partner agencies in Education and Glasgow Virtual School (GVS). This currently involves a 4-day training course for all practitioners, a GOLD course, and more recently the development of the Nurture Charter designed to support practitioner development as well as quality assurance of *how nurturing are our children's houses*.
- 5.10 Implementation of the *Nurture* programme continued in 2025, becoming a core component of the induction for new staff. The Nurture@Nights programme, continues to support Nurture based practice across night-shift teams, ensuring

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that children and young people receive a therapeutic and trauma-informed response 24/7.

- 5.11 The Nurture through Leadership programme continued with themes and concepts explored including *Radical Candor*, *Supporting Distress through Attachments Systems* and *High Functioning Teams*. This training is designed to ensure that Leadership teams have the skills and knowledge they need to manage services, lead change and support the delivery of great care.
- 5.12 The service developed Caring for Glasgow's Children, a policy which outlines both the vision of the service, and the models and frameworks that underpin what we do and why we do it. It is a toolkit for understanding practice and enhances liaison with partners and it helps to develop a shared understanding of practice.
- 5.13 The service is currently caring for a significant number of children and young people who are either diagnosed or undiagnosed neurodivergent. External consultation and support from partners in Specialist Children's Services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Glasgow Educational Psychology Service continues to be an area of priority for residential services, to ensure effective care and placement stability.
- 5.14 In 2025, the service has developed a range of supports to develop capacity to meet the needs of our growing neurodivergent population. This has included the development of Autism and Advanced Autism Training Courses; speech and language colleagues support with assessments and offer consultation. The introduction of monthly team talks focused on understanding the benefits of neuro-affirming practice and low-demand communication.
- 5.15 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health, wellbeing and development of children and young people is evident in the cohort being supported within the children's houses. Moreover, the success of the transformational agenda in shifting the balance and the reduction in out of authority placements has increased the complexity and acuity of need within children's houses. As indicated, the profile of neurodiversity and complexity and containing that cumulative need within an eight bedded home has become both pronounced and a significant challenge.
- 5.16 This context is mirrored across the country, along with the marked reduction in the recruitment of foster carers. Dialogue both nationally and locally remains ongoing with the Care Inspectorate to not only articulate this challenging environment but seek contextual understanding for the complex operating environment.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The IJB Finance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
 - a) note the findings of this report in respect of care inspectorate grades awarded to directly provided children's houses;
 - b) note the ongoing use of key question 7 to support inspection processes within children's residential services; and
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