

Agenda Item No.7

MINUTES of a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE** held on 14 June 2016 at County Hall, Matlock

PRESENT

Councillor J A Coyle (in the Chair)

Councillors C Bisknell, D Charles, D Greenhalgh and J Street

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor A Western

17/16 **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

18/16 **CHIEF OFFICER** Mags Young, Assistant Chief Executive, attended the meeting to inform the Committee what her department was doing to support the corporate parenting role.

Work had taken place around a targeted campaign for fostering/adoption. There had been an emphasis on a social media campaign and trying to attract the right people through targeting specific areas of need. There had been significantly more visits to the County Council's website, and a greater interest in fostering/adoption, along with an increase in online application forms being completed. Call Derbyshire had a role to play in providing information and helping the public to complete the application forms. Work would take place to look at keeping information up to date, and the key now was to convert interested enquiries into potential foster carers.

Each member of the Corporate Management Team was now a strategic lead for each thriving communities area, and they also had a role to undertake with care leavers. The Council was pursuing opportunities with Tesco stores across the county for care leavers. It was also stated that opportunities would be explored across the Chief Executive's department, and following discussions with the Council's HR Division, there had been the creation of paid internships and apprenticeships throughout the authority. It was emphasised that officers needed to be encouraged to ensure that care leavers were given priority interviews or placements, and the views of the Committee would be passed on. Performance information around this would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee, and it was also suggested that the appropriate Improvement and Scrutiny Committee could undertake a further review of progress made.

Details were provided around the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Partnership. An issue would be unaccompanied children and

what the Council could do to engage with partners about this. A report was due to be written to consider the financial implications and resources needed to provide the service. A media protocol had been agreed with partners, and input would be required from Health and Education.

19/16 CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE The number of children in care had increased to approximately 600 at April 2016, although there had been a continuing annual reduction. There would be an impact on the number as a result of the unaccompanied asylum seekers, but the full implications would not be known until they arrived. A breakdown was given of children in care by placement type, and the percentage of children who had had 3 or more placements within the year. This had increased, and more work would be undertaken around this. There had been an increase in the numbers of children admitted to care, and details were provided of the reasons why children had been admitted. There had also been an increase in the percentage of re-admissions to care.

In terms of children in care visits, information was given on the percentage of cases where all visits had been completed within timescale and the percentage of visits completed within timescale. There was an increasing trend in the percentage of cases where all reviews had been completed within timescale, and there had also been an increase in the number of children in care reviews where the child had participated. However, some concern was raised around the percentage of children in care who had had 3 or more social workers in the last 12 months, and this would be looked into.

There had been an improvement in the percentage of children in care who had had up to date health surveillance/promotion checks, and in the percentage who had had their teeth checked by a dentist. However, there was significant countywide variation around this, and work would be undertaken to look at whether children had access to a dentist. K Webster was asked to report back on this, and on whether all the relevant data was being recorded.

With regard to care leavers, there had been an improvement in the percentage living in suitable accommodation and those in employment, education or training.

20/16 REGIONALISATION OF ADOPTION SERVICES In June 2015, the Department of Education (DoE) had issued a Regionalisation Agenda, and this required all adoption agencies to make representations to the DoE on how they could regionalise adoption services. The East Midlands Adoption Consortium had been in existence for some time, and already had experience of cooperative working in the areas outlined in the regionalisation agenda. A bid had been made from 8 local authorities and 3 voluntary agencies. The bid

had been accepted, and a scoping exercise undertaken. A regional project manager had been appointed and a transition plan had been drawn up.

The DoE had made it clear that remaining as a standalone agency was not an option. The transition plan for the East Midlands bid proposed four possible options, and these were being discussed. A number of workstreams were being established to manage the progress of the project on to the anticipated project launch in autumn 2017, by which time all local authorities had to have effective plans in place. All local authorities had to be part of a regional adoption agency by 2020.

A project group within Derbyshire was being established to cover a range of issues. Details of the financial implications of the regional adoption agency or how its running costs would be managed between the local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies were not currently known. One of the workstreams was looking at how this would be managed and would be dependent on the chosen delivery model. The financial plan would need to include a range of information. Lots of other work was also ongoing, and it was noted that there would be a number of challenges.

RESOLVED to note the report and to give support to the establishment of an internal project group.

21/16 ADOPTION SERVICE REPORT The Committee was presented with the Annual Report of the Derbyshire Adoption Service April 2015 – March 2016. The key issues related to children awaiting placements – the number had been on a steady downward trajectory to 48 in 2015/16, and of those, the majority were in the process of matching or having their plan changed. Performance against the Scorecard Indicators A1 and A2 had improved, but still did not meet the Government thresholds. The figures reflected Derbyshire's ambition to seek adopters for children who were traditionally seen as harder to place, where there was comparatively good performance.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

22/16 EXCLUSION RATES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE During the 2015/16 academic year, up to 31 May 2016, there had been 64 children in care who had received at least one fixed term exclusion – 11 had been within the primary age range and 53 within the secondary age range. A breakdown of these figures was provided by gender, year group and location of school attended. The 64 children in care had received a total of 162 fixed term exclusions, and this had resulted in 626 sessions of education being lost. Details were given around the reasons for exclusions by year group, and the majority had been due to persistent disruptive behaviour or verbal abuse/threatening behaviour. Exclusions were most common in Key Stage 4,

although there was some concern around the number of exclusions in Year 9, and this would be investigated further.

A good relationship with Derbyshire schools underpinned the commitment to avoiding permanent exclusions and to keeping fixed term exclusions to a minimum. A rapid response by the authority to situations that could lead to a permanent exclusion was in place, and a range of alternative provisions had been developed to support young people when there had been a breakdown. It was noted that last year's exclusion data had not been accurate due to the fact that no Derbyshire children in care attending out of county schools had been included in the statistics. In addition, the Virtual School had been aware of a number of 'illegal exclusions', but this had been challenged and had now been resolved. Exclusion data would be looked at further to identify patterns of absences.

In terms of next steps and further areas for improvement for the Virtual School, a meeting would be arranged with senior managers to discuss strategies to significantly reduce the number of exclusions, and there would be a programme of multi-agency training to understand and support children in care who had experienced loss and trauma and who had attachment issues. Work would take place to ensure that there were early warning systems in place, especially for those placed out of county, and there were action plans in place for all pupils receiving their second exclusion. It was the intention to continue to develop alternative educational provision where mainstream had temporarily broken down and was not meeting the young person's needs, and to improve access to data, more regular reviews of PEPs and frequent tracking should identify issues before they escalated. It was aimed to improve liaison with relevant agencies to target schools where fixed term exclusions were repeated, and to ensure there was prompt crisis response/support from the Virtual School. There would be training to schools on strategies to understand and manage behaviour, and the development of an Attachment Aware School programme.

RESOLVED to note the report.

23/16 SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN IN CARE NOT IN FULL TIME EDUCATION As of 22 April 2016, 28 children in care had been identified as not being in full time education. A list was provided of the children and this summarised the reasons why they were not in full time provision and the plans and progress towards addressing this. The list included children who had a full time place available but either refused to attend or were unable to access it for the time being.

Of the cohort, 5 had SEN support, 12 had EHCP and 11 had no SEN. The majority of children currently in part time education were of secondary school age, with most in Key Stage 4, and Year 11 predominantly. This had

been consistent over time. A larger proportion of the children were residing in independent residential care homes. All children in support centres at Key Stage 4 had at least an element of alternative provision as part of their offer, and attendance and attainment of the group was monitored closely and fortnightly meetings were held to discuss progress.

RESOLVED to note the report.

24/16 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL/DEVELOPING CHILDREN IN CARE PARTICIPATION STRATEGY The Children in Care Council had recently met for the first time, and a number of activities had been agreed. It was the intention to build on the positive work that had already taken place, and the workforce would be asked to support the Children in Care Council. Relevant teams would also be asked to identify a Children in Care Council Champion to help promote and raise awareness of the Council.

Three children in care had recently represented Derbyshire at Westminster in a discussion on the Children's Bill. Once a summary of the meeting had been produced, it would be circulated to the Committee.

RESOLVED to note the report.

25/16 DESIGNATED NURSE It was reported that a new designated nurse for looked after children had been appointed – Juanita Murray – and she would be attending future meetings of the Committee.

26/16 DATE AND THEME OF NEXT MEETING The next meeting was due to be held on 29 July 2016, and the main theme would be residential services.