

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE** held on 20 September 2016 at County Hall, Matlock

**PRESENT**

Councillor J A Coyle (in the Chair)

Councillors D Charles, D Greenhalgh, J Street and A Western

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor C Bisknell

**35/16**      **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

**36/16**      **EXCLUSION RATES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE** During the 2015/16 academic year, there had been 67 children in care that had received at least one fixed term exclusion – 11 had been within the primary age range and 56 within the secondary age range. A breakdown was provided by gender and year group, and also by location of school the children attended. The 67 children in care had received a total of 189 fixed term exclusions, and this had resulted in 706 sessions being lost. The most common reasons for exclusion were persistent disruptive behaviour and verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult. Exclusions were most common in Key Stage 4.

Two additional children in care had received their first fixed term exclusion during July 2016 increasing the total to 67, and a further twelve exclusions had been reported to the Virtual School during July 2016 increasing the total to 189. This had resulted in a further 41 sessions being lost.

Of the 11 primary aged children in care that had been excluded, 8 had an EHCP or SEN Support. Of the 56 secondary aged children in care that had been excluded, 32 had an EHCP or SEN Support. Of the 11 primary aged children in care that had been excluded, 6 had a foster care placement, 3 had a foster care placement with a relative, and 2 were living in a residential home. Of the 56 secondary aged children in care that had been excluded, 30 had a foster care placement, 2 had a foster care placement with a relative, 1 lived with parents and 23 were living in a residential home. A breakdown was given of schools that had excluded children in care and the actions the Virtual School had taken.

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 Attachment Aware School programme would be extended.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**37/16      SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN IN CARE NOT IN FULL TIME EDUCATION** As of 31 July 2016, 5 children in care had been identified as not being in full time education. This figure was significantly reduced due to Year 11 pupils leaving school at the end of June 2016. A list was provided of the children and summarised the reasons why they were not in full time provision and the plans and progress towards addressing this. All of the 5 children had been out of full time provision for more than 12 weeks. However, they were accessing some form of education. The reasons why the young people were out of full time provision were due to behaviour issues (3), anxiety and mental health issues (1) and 1 had been categorised as other.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**38/16      OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE** Details were provided of the provisional outcomes at Early Years, Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 for OC2 children in care.

At Foundation Stage, the 2015/16 cohort had consisted of 12 pupils. Five were boys and 7 were girls, and 3 of the cohort had achieved good levels of development. Five children in care had attended Derbyshire schools, 4 had attended out of county schools, and 3 were living abroad in countries that did not undertake Early Years Foundation Stage assessment. A total of 6 of the cohort had been assessed using the Early Years Foundation Stage, and of the 6 children not assessed, 3 lived abroad, 1 had been held back a year, and 2 had significant disabilities/development delay and had not been assessed. As a result, 50% of those assessed had achieved good levels of development.

The 2015/16 Key Stage 1 cohort had consisted of 9 pupils – 5 boys and 4 girls. Five of the cohort had attended Derbyshire schools and four had attended out of county schools. Eight of the cohort had been assessed as one had been disapplied. 56% of the cohort had achieved age related

expectations in reading, 44% in writing, 22% in mathematics, and 25% in reading, writing and mathematics.

At Key Stage 2, the 2015/16 cohort had consisted of 23 pupils – 9 were boys and 14 were girls. Sixteen had attended Derbyshire schools, and 7 had attended out of county schools. A total of 13 of the cohort had been assessed at Key Stage 2. Of those not assessed, 1 child lived abroad, 1 had not sat due to mental health issues, 1 had been disapplied and 7 were working below the level of the test and had not been entered. Of those assessed, 17% had achieved age related expectations in reading, 52% in writing, 22% in SPAG, 35% in mathematics, and 9% in reading, writing and mathematics. A comparison was given of the children in care who had sat the Key Stage 2 test against the national and provisional data for all Derbyshire children.

At Key Stage 4, a total of 38 young people had made up the cohort, and 50% had been identified with special educational needs. 21 were male and 17 were female; and 18 had attended Derbyshire schools and 20 out of county schools. There was currently no published statistical information, but indications from a number of local authorities had indicated a significant reduction in the number of children achieving 5 A\*-C grades. The gap between children in care and their non-cared for peers was still too wide, and there was a lot to do to ensure that tracking and support was in place for the coming year.

Of the cohort, 13.2% had achieved 5 GCSEs at A\*-C grade, 13.2% had achieved 5+ GCSEs at A\*-C grade (including English and Maths), and 13.2% had achieved A-C grade in English and Maths. A total of 30 of the cohort were entered for GCSEs, and of the ones not entered, 2 had repeated Year 10, 3 had completed other qualifications, and 3 had been disapplied. Based on the revised cohort, the percentage of children achieving 5+ GCSEs at A\*-C including English and Maths increased to 16.7%. Some of the exam papers were being remarked, and if the remark was accepted, the percentage of the full cohort achieving 5+ GCSEs at A\*-C including English and Maths would increase to 15.8% and the percentage for the cohort entered for GCSEs would increase to 20%. A further report would be produced later in the year to provide finalised data and comparisons against national and regional statistics.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**39/16      FOSTERING SERVICE QUARTERLY RETURNS** The Committee was provided with an update of performance data in relation to the Fostering Service at 2016 Q1. There were a total of 419 homes – 11 had been approved and 17 had resigned. There were 767 approved placement spaces, of which 435 had been filled, and as at 30 June 2016, there were 110 IFA Placements. In the first quarter of 2016, there had been 5 unplanned

endings, and 30 young people aged 18+ who were being supported by their former carers. The total Fostering spend for the period April – June 2016 was £3,400,118.

The number of children in care looked after by the County Council had started to decrease over the last year. However, throughout the start of 2016, the number of looked after children had risen gradually and as at 30 June 2016 was 606. In the first three months of 2016/17, 83 children had been admitted into care, but only 61 had been discharged. The largest group of children admitted into care had been aged 10-15 years, which was the same as the previous year. This trend continued to impact on the fostering service in that the service continued to need more carers willing to care for older children. The shortage of placements for teenagers was reinforced by carers providing a home to care leavers.

The County Council also placed children with IFAs, and at the end of June 2016, there were 110 external placements. The rise in IFA numbers was an indication of a number of children remaining in placement, and a gradual rise in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children needing homes. As placements became established, and children remained, in some cases until they became care leavers, the IFA population increased against the number of new placements. 29% of the County Council's current IFA population lived within the county boundaries, and 40% lived within 20 miles or less of an area fostering team.

In Q1 2016, the authority had received 118 enquiries – of these, 13 had been word of mouth and 13 had been for Regulation 24/Family and Friends carers. The period had seen a reduction in both the number of enquiries and carers assessed. Six information events had been held throughout the county over Foster Care Fortnight, as well as a social media campaign. This had resulted in 80 enquiries. There had also been attendance at a variety of events, all of which had been well supported by foster carers. Talk Fostering Chesterfield and Talk Fostering South were now both active groups, promoting fostering and attending events. In September, a campaign was being undertaken to promote fostering for disabled children, and consideration was being given to increasing the capacity for unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Feedback from the East Midlands Fostering Recruitment Group had indicated that the County Council had bucked the trend this year in attracting a high number of enquiries. The number of Regulation 24 assessments had continued to rise, and in Q1 2016, 13 had been received.

In Q1 2016, 11 new carers had been approved. Of these, 5 had been from Chesterfield, 2 approvals had been for Regulation 24 carers, 3 had been from word of mouth recommendations and 1 had been from attending an information event.

In terms of future activity, the County Council's Fostering Service was implementing a review of its fees and allowances. A new scheme was proposed that would introduce a tiered banding system, and the scheme would change the way that carers were paid so that their skills and experience were recognised, rather than the current system which paid according to the demands of the child placed. This would be rolled out towards the end of the year. Work would be undertaken to improve the accuracy of utilisation figures, and to use them to improve occupancy, and information gathered from exit questionnaire analysis would be used to improve services.

**40/16      KEEP ON CARING** An update was provided on national Care Leaver developments, specifically the national strategy that had been launched in July 2016 – 'Keep on Caring – Supporting Young People from Care to Independence'. The strategy looked at how to improve services, support and advice for care leavers, and described how the State, as corporate parents, would support care leavers to achieve five key outcomes:-

- All young people leaving care should be better prepared and supported to live independently
- Improved access to education, employment and training
- Care leavers should experience stability in their lives, and feel safe and secure
- Improved access to health support
- Care leavers should achieve financial stability

The actions that would be undertaken to achieve these were detailed. Derbyshire was already in a strong position in relation to many of the issues, but further work was planned or underway. An action plan across Children's Services and Barnardo's was being developed with the aim of improving outcomes; and a range of work was being undertaken to develop the range and availability of suitable accommodation, including a Derbyshire Positive Housing Pathway event to be held on 11 October 2016. The current Care Leaver pledge would be reviewed in line with the strategy, practice to support the development of financial management skills and resilience would be promoted, and a range of initiatives were underway regarding improved EET. Strengthened scrutiny and governance arrangements regarding children in care and care leavers were being developed, and would be the subject of a future report to the Committee. There would be an evaluation of the impact of extending existing entitlements to age 25, including analysis of the resource implication and ensuring clarity of roles and expectations to enable accountability and best use of limited resources.

**RESOLVED** to note 'Keep on Caring', and the related work achieved, underway and planned in Derbyshire.

#### **41/16      FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS GOING ONTO HIGHER EDUCATION COURSES**

The current offer to care leavers going to study a higher education qualification had been put in place in 2013. The offer was that the County Council would ensure that a care leaver had sufficient funding to meet reasonable accommodation costs, living costs and the costs of equipment and books, and the maximum amount this could be in 2015/16 had been £8,942. In addition, a one off bursary of £2,000 was given for the length of the course. The offer also provided help financially to sustain foster relationships through the Staying Put policy, and would pay 50% of the tuition fees loan at the point repayment started. It would also help young people explore all the awards and sources of financial support available. It appeared that the current offer was quite generous when compared with other local authority areas.

The main change in 2016/17 was that the non-repayable means tested maintenance grant of £3387 per year would cease, and would be replaced with a repayable means tested maintenance loan of up to £10,702 per year. The maintenance grant had been used by the Authority to offset against the living costs for each care leaver. The impact on the Authority of the change would be to increase the financial burden by £3,387 per year, if the policy remained unchanged. Details were provided of some potential options for amending the policy, taking into consideration the impact on the care leaver, the Authority and guidance in the Keep on Caring Strategy.

Consultation with young people had highlighted accommodation, living costs, pastoral support, additional costs and fee repayments as being the most important for them when considering a university or higher education course. Based on this, care leavers would like an offer to include sufficient funds to ensure accommodation was secured for 365 days; funds for other living costs were sufficient to cover both term time and holiday periods; funds that would cover books, materials and equipment; all necessary learning assessment costs to support their application; a clear set of accommodation options out of term time; and a dedicated support worker. Taking into consideration these views and the 'reasonableness' test, the following options had been put forward:-

1. Accept the changes allowing the young person to take the maximum maintenance and fee loans and then continue to pay 50% of all the local repayments as they became due
2. Leave the County Council contribution to living costs at 2015/16 levels (£16,665 for three years), and repay 50% of any loan repayments as they became due
3. Offer a simple flat bursary
4. Leave the County Council contribution to living costs at 2015/16 levels, and repay 50% of any loan repayments at the successful completion of the course.

An outline was provided of the financial position for both the Authority and the Care Leaver of each of the options, and the potential impact. It was felt that Option 4 would be the most appropriate.

Following discussions, it was clear that the young people needed specialist support in selecting and applying for higher education courses. It was therefore suggested that an Advisor was identified within the current establishment to take on this role, and be a specialist and single point of contact for care leavers going onto higher education.

**RESOLVED** that (1) the report be noted;

(2) an Advisor from the existing establishment, either at DCC or Barnardo's (whichever is the more appropriate) takes on the responsibility of being a specialist in higher education to support Care Leavers;

(3) the young person be supported in identifying themselves as a Care Leaver to the learning provider to ensure that they access the full range of funds that are available to them;

(4) Option 4 be taken forward as this is being seen as 'reasonable' and fair

### **Package Details**

- £2,000 Government Bursary paid by DCC
- £16,665 DCC bursary to support living costs for 365 days
- Repayment of 50% of outstanding loans at the successful completion of the course

(5) accommodation costs be paid direct with the provider on behalf of the young person, with any balance of funds being paid monthly;

(6) the selected option be reviewed annually to ensure the bursary continues to meet the living costs and the needs of the care leavers;

(7) a review of all post 16 financial assistance be undertaken as in 2013, to ensure continued parity across all pathways. To be completed by the start of the 2017/18 academic year; and

(8) the Virtual School manages the process.

**42/16      CARE LEAVERS' EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES** The Committee received a presentation on employment, education and training (EET) opportunities for care leavers. There were a number of routes into

EET, including work experience opportunities across the County Council, the Care Leavers Employment Project, traineeships offered by Derbyshire Adult Community Education Services, I Step Up summer schools, apprenticeships with the Council, care leaver paid internships, and a senior manager monitor and challenge role. Job opportunities were also being identified with organisations that the County Council procured from. The local authority provided lots of support for care leavers, including Multi-Agency Personal Advisors, who provided information, advice and guidance relating to education and employment, the Virtual School, a Barnardo's After Care Personal Advisor, the Care Leaver's Employment Project, Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service and National Careers Service career coaches.

A strategy for EET for care leavers and children in care had been launched in June 2015, and the ambition was to achieve 100% participation in education, employment or training for children in care and care leavers by 2018. A Chief Officer Pledge seminar had taken place in October 2015, and there had been a pledge to increase work experience opportunities for children in care and care leavers. There was a commitment that all care leavers or children in care who were available to work should be afforded every opportunity to experience positive work placements, and that every young person in the cohort should be in employment, education or training. This was a high priority for the Council, but would only be achieved through a whole Council approach. Since the seminar had taken place, 19 applications from care leavers and children in care had been received, and 11 were currently in a work placement. It was now the intention to create a menu of opportunities for those who did not have specific aspirations to choose from.

K Brooks, Virtual Headteacher, gave an update on attainment from the 2015/16 Key Stage 4 cohort. 59 young people had made up the cohort, and 44 had Post 16 provision in place at the end of the summer term 2016. Almost half of the cohort had been identified with Special Educational Needs, and 22 were persistent absentees. The provisional attainment figures were presented, and the group was still a long way off its not in care peers. However, it was difficult to compare year on year, due to the changing nature of the cohort. In terms of Key Stage 5, 94% of PETPs were good/outstanding, and yearly Post 16 PETP meetings were taking place. There was a range of Virtual School Engagement Programmes, and college transition and university taster days. English as a second language support was being provided for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

J Iqbal, Care Leavers Employment Project Manager, provided information relating to the Care Leavers Employment Project. The primary objective was to secure employment, education or training for young people leaving care, with a particular emphasis on 19-21 year olds. Work was taking place to establish 14 intensively supported apprenticeship placements, and 10 supported internship placements within the County Council. The project



arranged bespoke traineeship programmes, held an annual careers fair, provided support with applications for college/university, provided one off grants for workwear, equipment and tools, and had a small budget for help with driving lessons. At September 2016, there were 13 supported apprenticeships in place. Seven young people were due to commence DCC internships on 3 and 10 October and 3 more were pending. It was queried whether it was possible to have a corporate car insurance policy, and this would be looked into.

There were a number of HR challenges for care leavers, including an interest in the Schemes, the motivation to apply, the Council's expectations of its employees, and gaining employment on the completion of the schemes. In terms of addressing these challenges, there was support from the Care Leavers Employment Project, and arranging taster days for young people prior to applying for a job. At the end of September, there would be induction days for the interns, and a workshop in October. The Council had ensured that there was flexibility in the contract with care leavers, so that they were able to change roles if they did not enjoy the job they were doing. It was also the intention that three months before the end of the internship, care leavers could apply for internal vacancies within the County Council.

A Marsh, 14-19 Manager, provided information around Derbyshire Adult Community Education (DACES). There were four full time study programmes across the county, and part-time study programmes, which were tailored to individual needs to include core skills for those young people not ready for a full-time study programme. I Step Up was a programme offered to support NEET young people with no identified destination to increase employability skills and motivation. Over 20 young people had benefitted from this in 2015, and further programmes were planned in different locations across the county. Details were also given about traineeships and apprenticeships.

B Sharif, Head of Service – Services for Teenagers and S Pickering, Team Leader – NEET and Participation, gave a performance update. This included a summary of the current position for care leavers – there were 687 care leavers aged 16-25, with 504 matched from Framework-i to the profile, and 183 not matched. Work was taking place to narrow the gap for vulnerable young people, but there was still a long way to go. The current data by locality was presented, and it was possible to start to prioritise work using this. Based on the information published by DfE for 2014/15, Derbyshire had been ranked joint 65<sup>th</sup> nationally (out of 150 LAs) for the percentage of care leavers in EET.

There were a number of future challenges, including raising aspirations, ensuring consistency of relationships, and the transition across professionals as young people moved on. There were also issues around young people living outside of Derbyshire and links with neighbouring authorities, an evaluation of the internship programme, and the changing cohort, which

included unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and young people coming into care later. These would be addressed.

The Committee was shown a short film detailing the story of Natalie, a care leaver, and how she was supported into employment, education or training. The Committee would write to Natalie to thank her for taking the time to take part, but also to congratulate her on her success.

**43/16      DENTAL APPOINTMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE** It had previously been reported that children in care were not having regular dental checks, and the Designated Nurse had been asked to investigate this. She had requested a list of all children in care who were not up to date with dental checks, and this had been compared with the electronic child health record. 117 children had been on the list, and the results were stated.

Kathy Webster reported that there were a number of reasons why the child was recorded as overdue for their dental check. The collection and recording of information was not robust, and there were discrepancies between the data collected by Social Care and Health. A number of considerations for Health were presented, along with recommendations for both Health and Social Care.