

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE** held on 18 July 2017 at County Hall, Matlock

**PRESENT**

Councillor A Dale (in the Chair)

**16/17** **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2017 be received.

**17/17** **PERFORMANCE MEASURES – HEADLINE REPORT** A report was received which provided details of how Derbyshire had performed in Key Performance Indicators for Children in Care in May 2017. Indicators that were RAG rated as areas of concern or working well in the Corporate Parenting Board data tables had been included. Additional indicators were detailed in the Corporate Parenting Board data tables.

**RESOLVED** to note the information contained in the report.

**18/17** **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE – KEY THEMES** Focussing each meeting on a key theme had enabled fuller discussion or scrutiny by Elected Members, than a more fixed agenda. This had also facilitated meaningful involvement of a Strategic Director in describing their Department's contribution to corporate parenting. A provisional plan was circulated and the Committee agreed on the following items for future meetings:-

12 September 2017 – Key theme – Adoption

31 October 2017 – key themes – Virtual school/education and Employment, Education and Training

12 December 2017 – key theme – participation, Quality Assurance and Independent Reviewing Officers

2018 – dates to be confirmed – first meeting – residential, fostering and sufficiency

**RESOLVED** that the items for the forthcoming meetings be agreed as detailed.

**19/17** **FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL AND QUARTERLY RETURN** The purpose of this report was to fulfil obligations as laid down in the Fostering National Minimum Standards (April 2011), to present comparative performance data on the service to Cabinet, to present written reports on the

management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service every 3 months and to monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to ensure that the service was effective and was achieving good outcomes for children.

Derbyshire County Council's foster carers usually care for between 70/75% of all fostered children; higher than the 69% U.K. national average. Agency placements had risen in line with Looked After Children figures. The majority of these children were either sibling groups, children aged 10 and over or a combination of the two, mirroring a trend in admissions that there were more, older 'harder to place' children entering care.

Recorded carer capacity had diminished which reflected a more realistic approach to what carers could offer rather than approving them for multiple placements which they may well be unable to undertake.

The County Council's Fostering Service had increased the amount of enquiries it received, both in the final quarter and over the course of the year. Social media, in particular Facebook was now the main source of enquiries.

In Quarter 4 2016-17, 8 new carers had been approved. However, by the end of Quarter 4 2016-17, the Authority had lost 56 carers; an additional 14 resignations from the previous quarter. This equated to an overall resignation rate of 14%, higher than the Fostering Network UK national average resignation rate. The main reasons for these resignations were highlighted.

The Committee raised concerns relating to couples transferring from County Council foster carers to IFA with children in situ, and were there any arrangements that could be put in place to prevent this happening or to compensate the Council where it did. The Legal Services Officer would look into this.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**20/17**      **CHILDREN IN CARE PROVISION** The Committee were updated on the key issues and developments for Children in Care and Care Leaver Provision.

Derbyshire's adoption performance was mixed with comparatively good outcomes regarding adoption of older children and those from BME backgrounds, but weaker regarding the timeliness of adoption (Indicators A1 and A2). There had been some analysis of 'outliers' and file audits linked to the recent Challenge day had provided useful information, but Derbyshire remained too slow even for relatively 'easy to place' children. Establishing a permanence team was one of several plans underway to tackle this and the

new Derbyshire team would be working closely with parallel teams across D2N2.

Derbyshire's intention was that the majority of children in care were cared for by Derbyshire foster carers in Derbyshire and thus the primary focus was on recruiting and retaining sufficient quality foster carers. The national rate of fostered children being placed with Local Authority carers as opposed to Independent Fostering agency was 69%; in Derbyshire this was usually between 70 and 73%. The development in 2015 of the Foster Care Charter and also the establishment of the Foster Care Council had proved successful. Work was underway regarding fostering allowances and would be reported to future meetings.

Derbyshire had 4 children's homes for severely disabled young people, 7 for young people with a range of needs and the Time Out team who provided short term/emergency care and support. The last year had seen an improvement in Ofsted judgements and these were highlighted. Derbyshire homes had now started to receive their 2016-17 inspections. Unfortunately, Fairview had received a 'Requires Improvement' judgement and there was a robust action plan to ensure the necessary improvements. The Getaway was judged to be Outstanding.

The key Care Leaver service regarding the provision of Care Leavers Personal Advisers was commissioned from Barnardo's who successfully tendered for the 3 year contract which started on 1st July 2015.

One relevant performance indicator concerned the percentage of care leavers living in suitable accommodation which had shown steady improvement over the last 3 years from 84.6% to 95.4% to 98%.

Derbyshire was determined to improve levels of Employment, Education or Training (EET) and to support this in October 2015 launched the Chief Officer Pledge to increase work experience opportunities for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Future reports would be submitted regarding extending existing entitlements so that all care leavers would be able to access support from a Personal Adviser to age 25 as outlined in the national strategy launched in July 2016 'Keep on Caring – Supporting Young People from Care to Independence'.

**RESOLVED** to note the information covered in the report.

**21/17      CARE LEAVERS' EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**      The County Council was committed to supporting Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leavers, ensuring that everyone involved in the life of a looked after child could do more to support them to succeed in education and employment and reach their full potential.

This was underpinned by the Authority's ambition to improve the current levels of CiC and Care Leavers who were Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET), by committing to achieve 100% participation in Employment, Education and Training (EET) for CiC and Care Leavers by 2018.

Up to March 2017 80% of Children in Care aged 16-17 were EET and 20% were NEET. The cohort size was 100. At June 2017 54% of Care Leavers aged 16 – 21 were EET and 46% were NEET; 37% of Care Leavers aged 22 – 25 were EET and 63% were NEET. The OC3 Outcomes return to DfE for 2015-16 showed that 49.7% of Care Leavers living in Derbyshire were EET.

- MATs tracked destinations to young people's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday and recorded these destinations on Core;
- Barnardos tracked young people up to their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Barnardos did not use Core to record destinations and instead used Framework-i to record their work;
- There was not currently the facility to record destinations on Framework-i other than in case notes;
- The resource for people to work with young people aged 21-25 as outlined in 'Keep on Caring' was still to be identified.

Our CiC and Care Leavers told us they wanted to be listened to, respected, supported and informed. Therefore, developing positive relationships between MAT PA's, After Care Services (Barnardos) and young people were fundamental in developing trust and engagement. It also ensured that professionals had a joined up working together approach to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people.

Through young people's Personal Education and Training Plans (PETPs), MAT PA's took a holistic approach to supporting career choices by working from a strength based approach, encouraging young people to think about their interests, motivations, coupled with impartial information, advice and guidance about future pathways and trends. Embedding the role of the Corporate Parent as a whole, Council responsibility through the allocation of Care Leavers to Strategic Leads, ensured that there was a corporately shared vision for our young people to achieve positive EET outcomes.

The Care Leavers Employment Project (CLEP) primary objective was to secure employment, education and training for young people leaving care,

and the team had a particular emphasis on the 19 - 21 year old age group. The range of services the team provided was highlighted.

CLEP, together with DACES, Barnardos and MATs, had arranged a tailor made traineeship specifically for Care Leavers. The traineeship ran for 6 weeks over 3 days per week and included 3 days of work experience, confidence building, first aid and food hygiene, crafts and construction sessions, go-kart making, university visits and meeting employers.

The County Council provided a growing number of Apprenticeships, and currently 100 Apprenticeship opportunities were being advertised across the Council. Care Leavers received support to apply and a guaranteed interview. The introduction of the Levy and Public Sector targets for Apprenticeships would continue to mean this would be an important element of the strategy to increase EET. Eight Care Leavers were currently in Apprenticeships (April 2017 to date). These were in a range of occupations from bricklaying to teaching assistant, Adult Care, Customer Service, which CLEP had sourced and DCC have financed. There are two young people currently on work experience prior to Apprenticeship. Details of the Care Leaver Paid Internship were provided.

The Service was currently exploring the possibility of enhancing the support to Care Leavers through Social Value clauses in contracts. One aspect of this was to establish a central fund within the Authority, to which Care Leavers could apply, to support them with travel etc. This was a particular need where the Care Leaver goes straight into employment.

In order to support the future challenges of ensuring that young people received the best services, an action plan had been developed to focus on the needs of the cohort. The action plan was work in progress and was a working document. The improvements had been identified under the five following headings:

- Case Load Management
- Workforce Development
- Partnership Development
- Performance Management
- Data recording

Resource to ensure the authority was able to meet new guidance in 'Keep on Caring' needed to be identified, to ensure we were best able to monitor and track Care Leavers aged 21-25.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**22/17      OVERVIEW OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL** The Virtual School had the overall responsibility for monitoring, supporting and providing or resourcing interventions and promoted the education achievement of Derbyshire Children in Care from 0 – 25 years of age. The Virtual School had high aspirations for children and ensured that whenever possible the young people experienced the stability and support they needed in schools to make good progress. As an innovative Virtual School it ensured that young people had access to new and inspirational opportunities and experiences which opened up new horizons, help build confidence and independence. The Virtual School Headteacher role was currently in a good strategic position to discharge the duties of the post effectively. Systems and procedures were becoming firmly embedded and the team structure and ways of working were having a positive impact. The Virtual School strived to ensure that the Children in Care achieved their best possible educational outcomes by:

- Coordinating and quality assuring all Personal Education Plans (PEPs).
- Monitoring and challenging school to make effective use of Pupil Premium in line with the Virtual School for Children in Care Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) Guidance.
- Monitor, track and challenge the academic progress, attendance and exclusions of Children in Care.
- Using the tracking data to highlight individuals who were not on target to achieve their predicted outcomes and provide them with additional educational support.
- Ensure Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) needs were identified and supported appropriately.
- Implementing a range of targeted interventions to raise academic standards.
- Providing support and challenge to students, schools, advisers, social workers and carers.
- Ensuring effective transition between schools or specialist providers.
- Encouraging young people to have high aspirations about their futures and remove barriers to education.
- Leading and developing training for foster carers, designated teachers, school governors, elected members and bespoke training for alternative learning providers and staff in schools.
- Celebrating Children in Care achievements for all pupils

The achievements made during Spring Term 2017 were highlighted and the priorities for the Summer Term 2017 were set out in the report.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

**23/17**      **MONTHLY DATABOOK FOR CHILDREN IN CARE** The Committee was updated on the monthly data that was available in relation to Derbyshire Children in Care.

The full version of the data book for June 2017 was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The monthly data book was distributed to stakeholders, including Virtual School Team, Virtual School Governing Body, CLT and various strategy groups. The information had improved access to data enabling the Virtual School Team to identify issues and implement actions and strategies before they escalated. The Virtual School had begun Challenge meetings with schools where required and these were proving beneficial to both parties.

As a result of the regular Virtual School Heads meetings a new Virtual School Data Manager meeting schedule was being established. All Virtual School Data Personnel would meet to discuss and share data and good practice. The data book was constantly evolving to meet all reporting requirements.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**24/17**      **CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL** The Children in Care Council (CiCC) was vital to the work of the Local Authority as it ensured that those children and young people who were looked after had the opportunity to formally challenge the Authority as their corporate parents. The department's commitment to the CiCC was evident as it was one of the priorities in the Participation Action Plan 2017-18. Having a CiCC meant the Authority had an established group of young people who could be consulted on broader issues which affected young people. The Authority was continually reviewing how to ensure that the voice of children in care was represented on the Derbyshire Youth Council.

Members of the CiCC met with the department's key decision makers on 22 December 2016 for the 'Big Conversation' and the 2016-17 'Pledge' was signed off by Jane Parfremment, Strategic Director Children's Services and the previous Leader of the Council, Councillor Anne Western. Members of the CiCC attended the Corporate Parenting meeting in March 2017 to provide an update on the 'Pledge' and explain what the decision makers had agreed to do.

An 'Evaluation' meeting was scheduled for 11 August 2017 to track the progress of the 'Pledge' and for the decision makers to present their 'You said, we did' feedback on the Pledge. Members of the Children in Care Council would be involved in organising and facilitating the planned evaluation of the 'Pledge' at the 'August 2017 Big Conversation' with decision makers.

The Children in Care Council representatives met on 8 May 2017 in High Peak, 9 May in Derby, and on 11 May 2017 in Chesterfield and all the meetings saw an improvement in the attendance.

Guests at the CICC were:

- Mary Halliwell, Professional Adviser – Adoption and Fostering.
- Dr Jenny Taylor from Horizons.
- Jane Parfremment, Strategic Director Children's Services, attended the meeting at Chesterfield.

The future priorities of the CiCC were presented as follows:

- continue to develop its identity and promotional materials
- continue to build links with the Derbyshire Youth Council.
- continue to review the Pledge and embed the twice yearly 'Big Conversation'
- the introduction of a SEND Officer with a lead for Participation to explore ways of ensuring children in care with SEND had a voice via the CiCC .
- explore how to provide children in care who were under 10 years of age with a voice.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.