

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE** held on 12 September 2017 at County Hall, Matlock

**PRESENT**

Councillor A Dale (in the Chair)

Officers in attendance:- Natalie Amey, Shruti Mehta, Helen Moxon, Juanita Murray, Jane Parfremment, Gwen Roe and Bish Sharif.

**25/17**        **MINUTES**    **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

**26/17**        **PERFORMANCE MEASURES – CHILDREN IN CARE LEAVERS - HEADLINE REPORT** A report was received which provided details of how Derbyshire had performed in Key Performance Indicators for Children in Care in July 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.

It was noted that a specialist team to deal with adoption was developing well.

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

**27/17**        **ADOPTION SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17**

The Adoption Service Annual Report 2016-17 provided information about the adoption service, developments in the service and outcomes for children looked after by Derbyshire County Council. It was available to the public, elected members, partner agencies and staff.

The vision of the Children in Care Provision was that Derbyshire provides sufficient high quality homes for children and young people in its care and care leavers, which enable them to achieve their potential and where they are safe and feel safe, valued and listened to; that the care provided by foster carers, residential staff, adoptive parents and others for and to children and young people in our care mean that the outcomes for every child in care are at least as good as their non-looked after peers; and that wherever possible Derbyshire children in care are adopted by Derbyshire adoptive parents.

Derbyshire County Council's Adoption Service was the first to be rated 'good' in the United Kingdom, under the OfSTED inspection regime in 2013.

It was noted that there was an error on page 16 Adopters table which should read 33 adopters approved for 2015/16 and this would be amended before the document was published.

Further discussion was held on the progress of the regional adoption agency, Derbyshire, Derby City, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City (D2N2) pilot considering how the different strands might develop in future; the adoption scorecard and the need to ensure that the England averages were met or exceeded.

Workers in the adoption service continually look at ways to improve practice and develop the service. The primary agenda for 2017/18 would be the development of the Regional Adoption Agency. The adoption service will consider how best to develop relationships with the new permanence team; will continue to develop Fostering for Adoption; will continue to work on the interface between the adoption support team and the localities; and will consider ways of improving the recording of information about adoption support cases.

**RESOLVED** that the Annual Report be agreed, subject to the factual information detailed in the minute being amended and then placed on the Derbyshire County Council website.

#### **28/17      FOSTERING SERVICE 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.

At the end of Quarter 1, 2017-18, there were 658 children in care, Looked After by Derbyshire County Council, which was an increase of 26 children since the end of the last financial year.

Derbyshire County Council's foster carers usually care for over 70% of all fostered children; higher than the 69% U.K. national average. Derbyshire like many other local authorities, was experiencing a lack of sufficient internal provision of approved carers to be able to meet the needs of newly arriving Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

Derbyshire County Council had experienced two consecutive years where the number of resignations overtook the number of carers recruited, however in the first Quarter of 2017/18 there has been an increase of carers recruited against resignations. Over the period 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2017, there was an increase in the number of enquiries to become foster carers compared to the same period last year; 140 enquiries, up from 116.

Since the implementation of the Staying Put initiative where a carer continues to provide accommodation for the young person they look after, once they become a care leaver, Derbyshire County Council has generally seen an ongoing increase in the number of children choosing to remain with their former foster carers. However the percentage of care leavers in Quarter 1 2017/18 who left foster care was 41.6%.

Since 1 April 2017 the County Council has introduced a new means of payment, which replaces the previous Fostering Plus and Children First schemes. This Fostering Skills Allowance was a much fairer way of redistributing the money the County Council sets aside to pay carers in addition to the Foster Carer Allowance, bringing Derbyshire County Council's Fostering Service in line with its peers and competitors. From the 1 July 2017, the first phase of the scheme has now been reviewed and consultation with foster carers was ongoing.

There continued to be a rise in IFA placements alongside an ongoing rise in children coming into care. Although many of the children placed with agencies were older or teenagers, there was a need to place small, young sibling groups within our own fostering population.

The Service Plan targets need reviewing in the light of National trends relating to foster carers and recruitment; a number of changes to the type and age of child admitted into care; new national trends most noticeably an ongoing rise in LAC numbers of which a significant element are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

#### **29/17      ADOPTION SERVICE - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements and would provide a source of information to all areas of the Children's Services Department, partner agencies, adopters and prospective adopters, children who might be adopted and their parents or guardians and adopted people, their parents, birth family and former guardians. The Statement of Purpose was reviewed no less than annually.

**RESOLVED** That the Statement of Purpose be agreed and placed on the Derbyshire County Council website.

#### **30/17      DERBYSHIRE ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE TEAM**

The report detailed the development of Derbyshire's Permanence and Adoption Team, as part of the work under the Regionalised Adoption Agency.

The Team went live as from 21st August and was made up of social workers from within the existing children's social work teams, in the main from Children in Care teams through expressions of interest followed by interview and selection process. The team manager would be attending Locality Management Team meetings to discuss tracking arrangements and the model of delivery as agreed by the D2N2 Regionalisation Project Group. Close links were being formed with the D2N2 management team and the team would be part of the D2N2 training for practitioners across the region.

Management Information Officers for all D2N2 members have attended Project Board meetings to agree key performance data required and the Board was keen to adopt the performance dashboard developed by Derbyshire's Management Information team. Minor additions and amendments were being made to the dashboard and the Management Information team was currently testing out the system.

Over the past months locality teams have been working on case transfers and allocations, except where it was deemed to be best practice for the case to be held with the social worker.

The development, practice and performance of the team would be the main focus of the newly formed Derbyshire Adoption Improvement Board.

It was agreed that the report and team structure attached as an appendix could be shared with Health professionals.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### **31/17      MONTHLY DATABOOK FOR CHILDREN IN CARE**

One of the key tasks of the Virtual School was to monitor all children in care from birth to Year 13, and the monthly databook, produced by the Virtual School, provided information on a range of statistics. The headlines for children in care as at 31 July 2016 were reported.

There were 663 children and young people aged 0-18 in care, and 436 attended school in 32 different local authorities. 124 children in care were within early years and 180 were within the primary age range – 125 were within county schools and 55 in out of county schools. Primary children attended a total of 123 schools, 77 of which were Derbyshire schools and 46 were out of county schools. 256 children in care were within the secondary age range, and 180 were in county schools, 71 in out of county schools and 5 had no school place. Secondary children attended a total of 123 schools, 58 of which were Derbyshire schools and 65 out of county schools. 83 children in care were post 16. 218 attended good or better Derbyshire schools and settings, and 112 attended good or better out of county schools and settings. Of the 28 eligible two year olds as at summer term 2017, 22 were accessing provision in

Derbyshire settings, and of the 33 three and four year old cohort, 32 were accessing provision – 24 in Derbyshire settings and 8 in out of county settings. There was a high level of SEN, with 88 of the primary aged children and 135 of the secondary aged children having an EHCP or SEN. 28 children in care and 6 care leavers were unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

It was noted that attendance of children in care had improved over this period as had exclusions.

Although it was acknowledged that the starting point for benchmarking Children in Care attainment was compared to national levels for all pupils, it would be useful for the meeting to know those levels.

The information has improved access to data enabling the Virtual School Team to identify issues and implement actions and strategies before they escalate. The Virtual School have begun Challenge meetings with Schools where required and these are proving beneficial to both parties.

The number of term time sessions lost for holidays was a disappointment and this would be investigated further.

It was reported that a study had been undertaken whereby points were allocated to events/circumstances that occurred in a child's life and how these could forecast the outcomes for them. It was agreed that the progress of this study be investigated further and a report submitted to the next appropriate Corporate Parenting meeting.

**RESOLVED** (1) to note the report; and

(2) that further research be undertaken on the study referred to in the minute and a report be submitted to this meeting on its findings.