

MINUTES of a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE** held on 28 January 2015 at County Hall, Matlock

PRESENT

Councillor K Gillott (in the Chair)

Councillors J A Coyle and J Street

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors D W E Charles, D T Greenhalgh and A Western

1/15 MINUTES RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

2/15 SUPPORTING CARE LEAVERS INTO EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING The Strategic Director of Corporate Resources attended the meeting to provide an update on care leavers' access to County Council apprenticeships and on the wider work to ensure the best outcomes for children leaving care. The Council had a target that 100% of care leavers would be in Education, Employment or Training. Young people leaving the care of the County Council would enter a range of schemes in employment or training, including apprenticeships directly provided by the County Council. Details were provided of what opportunities young people leaving care in 2013/14 had pursued.

County Council apprenticeships represented one opportunity, and whilst the Council had a strong commitment to recruit, train and develop apprenticeships, this opportunity would not be suitable for all young people. This could be because the range of apprenticeships the County Council offered did not meet the young person's aspirations. In addition, apprenticeships required a level of skill and provided the opportunity to study and pass technical examinations, and it was therefore important that a young person had the motivation, drive and skills to succeed. Whilst the Council as a corporate parent had a responsibility to ensure the best outcomes for the young people leaving its care, a quota of apprenticeships set aside for these young people would be inappropriate, both for them and for the wider group of young people in Derbyshire.

The Council had in place a number of arrangements to achieve its target of 100% of care leavers in Education, Employment or Training and there were also a number of initiatives to support young people to take on apprenticeships where they wanted to and to help them pursue other opportunities. Care leavers were provided with specific targeted support in their applications for Council apprenticeships, and a protocol agreed between CAYA and the HR Division ensured that care leavers were notified of

opportunities before external advertisement and were given additional one-to-one support during the recruitment process. Suitable candidates for apprenticeships were automatically offered an interview. The Care Leavers Employment Project and colleagues profiled all young people leaving care to identify those who would be suitable for an apprenticeship. Applicant's levels of functional skills were tested by Chesterfield College as a certain level was required by the Skills Funding Agency. Where a young person was assessed as needing further development to be ready to undertake an apprenticeship, additional pre-apprenticeship training and support was put in place.

The Council facilitated a number of other avenues available to young people leaving care, and financial support was available for this. The County Council was proactive in working with local companies to facilitate the development of apprenticeships. Traineeships and pre-apprenticeship programmes were discussed with young people who wished to consider an apprenticeship but were not yet ready. The County Council had adopted the 'Work Experience Quality Charter' and worked to offer experience to young people whilst they were still in care, and the quality of work experience placements was monitored by the HR Division. CAYA staff pro-actively worked with young people to prepare them for interviews, including developing interview skills, helping with dress and practical support. CAYA had established a database which included available apprenticeships, traineeships, internships and graduate placements, both within and outside the Council. Barnardo's care leavers services undertook engagement work with young people who were not ready for Education, Employment or Training, and this focussed on group work, creative relationship building and developing volunteering opportunities.

Further work was planned to strengthen the Council's support to young people, and this included a guarantee of a work experience placement to all children in care within the County Council if they wanted one, as part of the on-going procurement review to include a requirement to offer apprenticeship opportunities to Derbyshire young people, and as part of the review and potential re-tender of apprenticeship training providers in 2016, to further strengthen the existing requirements to provide support to care leavers.

It was noted that a strategy for teenagers had now been developed, and this would be presented to the next meeting. It was also agreed to have a six monthly update on the progress of care leavers.

RESOLVED to note the report.

3/15 PERFORMANCE REPORT An update was provided on performance around service for children in care. This included information on numbers of children in care, placement types, admissions and discharges, visits to children in care, reviews of children in care, participation of children

and young people in their reviews, escalations, health outcomes for children in care, children in care placed more than 20 miles from home, children who go missing from home or care, children in care with disabilities, and numbers of adoptions.

Numbers of children in care had been decreasing, although the number at the end of November 2014 (632) had been a small increase. The introduction of multi-agency Edge of Care Resource Panels to better gate-keep admissions to the care system and the introduction of systemic practice training across all districts was intended to reduce the overall number of children in care. A reduction in numbers to approximately 600 by the end of March 2015 had been targeted.

In terms of placement types, at the end of November 2014, 55.4% of Derbyshire's children in care had been placed in a foster placement provided by the local authority, and this had been an increase. There had been a decrease in the percentage placed in IFA placements. The percentage of children admitted to care who had previously been in care had increased for the twelve months ending November 2014. There had been an improvement in the participation by children in care in their reviews, and the majority of children in care who had participated in reviews had done so by physically attending and speaking for themselves.

With regard to health outcomes for children in care, there had been poor outcomes. The percentage of children in care aged 5 and under who had up-to-date Health Surveillance/Promotion checks had decreased significantly, as had the percentage of children in care who had up-to-date Health Assessments, and the percentage who had had their teeth checked by a dentist. An audit would be undertaken around health outcomes to check where there were blocks in the process, and this would be discussed further. It was hoped that improvements would be reported at the next meeting.

The percentage of children in care who had been placed more than 20 miles from home at the end of September 2014 had seen a small decrease, and the percentage who had been placed outside the Derbyshire LA boundary had also seen a decrease. The percentage who had been placed in agency placements had been lower than the percentage placed outside the LA boundary – this indicated that Derbyshire had been able to recruit foster carers who lived outside the LA boundary.

The overall number of individual children who went missing from home or care had been reducing, although there had been a slight increase in November 2014. The overall number of instances of a child going missing from home or care in Derbyshire had also been reducing, although the number during the twelve months ending November 2014 had seen an

increase. Further work was to take place with staff and foster carers around what they needed to do when a young person went missing.

Information was provided around the Adoptions Scorecard Indicators A1 and A2. Data for the 36 months ending 30 November 2014 had showed that the average length of time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family had decreased to 580 days, and the DfE threshold for the 2012-15 period was 487 days. Information available for the 36 months ending November 2014 had also showed that the average length of time between the local authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family had been 243 days, and the DfE threshold for the 2012-15 period was 121 days.

The percentage of care leavers who were living in suitable accommodation had seen a small decrease, although Derbyshire's outcome was still higher than the overall England outcome and the statistical neighbour average. Accommodation for care leavers was being reviewed, and work was being commissioned around this. At the end of November 2014, the percentage of care leavers who were engaged in employment, education or training had decreased further. The percentage of care leavers in custody at the end of November had increased, and this impacted on the measures for suitable accommodation and employment, education or training.

4/15 CARE LEAVER PLEDGE Agreement was sought for Derbyshire's Pledge for Care Leavers, which had been informed by work undertaken by Derbyshire Care Leavers on the Care Leavers Charter, the National Care Leavers Strategy, and the Entitlements Inquiry. The Pledge and accompanying document 'Meeting Our Pledge to Care Leavers' had been discussed and agreed with a group of care leavers.

Once approved, it was the intention to produce the Pledge in a more young people friendly format and to share it with young people in care aged 16 and over. Independent Reviewing Officers would check with young people that they understood what support was available to them when they left care. It was felt that it would be useful to include in the Pledge details of who to contact if the actions were not being met.

RESOLVED that the Pledge be approved.

5/15 VIRTUAL SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION The Virtual School Self-Evaluation outlined data for children in care twelve months plus as at 31 March 2014. Each year, the cohort varied both in terms of size and in the general make up.

Headline information was reported. Early Years outcomes had improved. Attainment continued to improve for Derbyshire Children in Care at

Key Stage 1 Level 2 – the gap between Derbyshire children in care and those who were not had significantly narrowed in reading and maths. Work still needed to be undertaken around writing, and a number of projects had been planned for 2015/16 around this.

Attainment had not improved at Key Stage 2 Level 4, and the gaps remained significantly wide against the East Midlands comparator group and statistical neighbour group. The percentage achieving Level 5 in reading had improved, but the percentage achieving Level 4 in writing had decreased. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 in maths had also improved. This year's cohort of 22 pupils had included 15 boys, and 50% of the cohort had had Special Educational Needs including 41% with a statement of SEN. Seven of the cohort had been achieving below Level 2 prior to the end of the Key Stage. Work was taking place around improved tracking of both this and the current Year 6 cohort to ensure both groups received access to appropriate intervention and support. There were also a number of projects and activities planned for 2015/16 to support KS2 pupils.

With regard to Key Stage 4, slightly more young people had achieved 1 A*-G GCSE. However, fewer young people had achieved 5+ A*-G GCSEs and significantly fewer young people had achieved 5+ A*-C and 5+ A*-C including English and Maths GCSEs. Many looked after Year 11 children had been affected by the GCSE changes.

Derbyshire had the highest percentage of fixed term exclusions in the East Midlands, and this impacted on achievements. Data indicated that 78 children in care had been excluded in 2013/14 with 288 days of education lost. A review of the current role of the Virtual School Education Welfare Officer role was required to see what could be offered to support schools in reducing exclusions. The Virtual School required accurate information on any fixed term exclusion for children in care, and all schools had been required to send any exclusion letter to the Virtual School Head.

There were a number of outstanding judgement areas, including the curriculum, which was due to the delivery of alternative curriculum by Creative Mentors; Pupil Premium due to the way in which the Virtual School was requiring schools to be accountable for pupil premium spend and impact; and Uni-fi due to the embedding of Social Pedagogy in all areas of the Virtual School work. The Virtual School team had formally been launched in October, and a celebration day was currently being planned for young people and their carers for April. Designated Teacher network meetings had commenced and a training programme was currently in the planning process. Details were provided of the Derbyshire Virtual School Project Programme.

RESOLVED to note the report.

6/15 PROGRESS REPORT FOR CURRENT Y11 CHILDREN IN CARE AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The Committee was informed of the progress being made by the current cohort of Year 11 children in care, including their school placements, Special Educational Needs and other interventions in place. Data was based on current attainment levels rather than predicted levels, and it was recorded in line with the published thresholds.

There were currently 63 children in care in Year 11, and of these, 24 had statements of special educational need or education health care plans. Forty-four children had been in care for a year or more, and out of the 63, 18 were attending schools out of Derbyshire. There were currently five children who were working at the level of attaining 5 GCSEs, including Maths and English, at a grade C or above.

The Virtual School was working with schools and settings to ensure good attendance, appropriate support and that interventions to improve levels of attainment were targeted at the young people. Three agencies were currently contracted to provide additional 1:1 tuition in a variety of subjects, and this was in addition to the support being offered by the Virtual School. A variety of incentives were being offered to students to support their engagement with these initiatives.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7/15 FOSTERING SERVICE QUARTERLY RETURNS Performance data on the service was presented, and all information had been taken from the annual Ofsted dataset from 1 April – 30 September 2014. There had been an increase in the number of approved foster homes, although there were still a large number of placement vacancies, and this was an ongoing concern.

There had been a reduction in the number of IFA placements, and Erewash continued to have the greatest need for IFA placements, followed by Chesterfield. The age of children placed with IFA's showed an indication towards older children and teenagers. Almost half the children placed were siblings, but there continued to be placements made for single children under the age of 10. 64 IFA placements were 1 year old and 40 had been ongoing for two years or more. Of these, 16 were over four years old. There had been a specific focus on siblings in IFA usage.

Over the period, 240 children had been fostered, and details were provided on allegations and missing incidents and the number of young people aged 18+ who had been supported by former foster carers.

There had been a number of resignations over the period, and these had been largely due to family circumstances. For the past two years,

datasets had shown that recruitment had not generated a surplus against resignations. However, the last six months of 2014/15 had shown a reversal in this trend, with the authority generating a surplus of five new foster homes.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8/15 FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT As at 31 October 2014, the Council cared for 632 children and young people, and had a duty to provide sufficiency of care placements. Of the 458 fostered children, Derbyshire currently placed 23% of fostered children in Independent Fostering placements. Further increasing the percentage of in-house foster placements would improve outcomes for children in care and produce significant budget savings. On average, an IFA placement cost at least £12,500 per annum more than a County Council placement, and it was noted that the age profile of current carers suggested that many would seek to retire over the next few years.

Building the overall fostering capacity was essential in redressing the balance between residential and family based care. The specialist DCC Contract Carer scheme for teenagers with complex needs cost around £70,000 per annum less than DCC residential care, and for the majority of young people, it supported them to achieve better outcomes.

iMPower had been commissioned to undertake a project with the fostering service to identify existing strengths to build on, opportunities for service improvements and financial savings. The report had recommended a structured and sustained programme of change and focused on improving the two key areas that would increase the in-house share. The programme would involve implementing a number of changes, across four main areas. The end goal of the project was to realise savings by increasing the proportion of looked after children who were placed in in-house fostering placements, whilst maintaining or improving placement quality and outcomes. It was suggested that, after a three year period, net savings to the Council base budget would be significant. The underpinning theme for the programme was that involving foster carers in co-production of the developments was the best way of achieving sustainable and comprehensive change.

RESOLVED that the work to increase fostering capacity be noted.

9/15 ADOPTION SERVICE TWICE YEARLY RETURNS Performance data for the Adoption Service between 1 April – 30 September 2014 was presented. It was reported that there had been a drop in the number of children adopted, and there had been a slowdown in the number of adoptive families with a child placed but waiting for an Adoption Order. The timescale on assessments had worsened, and consideration was being given on how to manage this. There had been an improvement in not splitting sibling groups

when the plan had been to place them together. During the period, 153 children had been subject to an Adoption Plan and there were 34 with a Placement Order but had not been matched. It was noted that, currently, the authority was only looking for families for 18 children.

Up to 30 September 2014, there had been 101 enquiries, and 25 applications to adopt. Work was taking place to try to recruit adopters for those children and young people who were harder to place. There was an issue with trying to place older children. The Family Finding events that had taken place had been successful, but due to the small number of children, consideration was being given to a different type of event.

There had been an increase in the demand placed upon Adoption Support Services, including requests for support and letterbox exchanges. The provision of support had reduced and this reflected the fact that many requests for adoption support could be resolved quickly.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

10/15 IRO ANNUAL REPORT The annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service was presented. It was reported that the current team had been expanded, and there were now twelve reviewing officers throughout the county. The IRO's had played a greater role in monitoring and reviewing those children placed at a distance, and had increased the reviewing of children whose independent placements had needed additional scrutiny. Other work of the IRO's was detailed.

During 2014, there had been an increased use of secure accommodation, with four young people spending time in Secure Units outside Derbyshire. The IRO team had been involved in chairing and organising eight secure criteria reviews. The increased concern for children had prompted a review and re-write of the secure policy and procedures and had led to an increase in pre-secure and secure meetings. The challenge and review of vulnerable young people at risk of needing secure accommodation remained a key part of the IRO role and function. There were plans to offer some training to social workers and managers on secure Policies and Procedures.

Rates of participation by children in their review had been over 90% in the year to October 2014. Progress had continued to be made on getting reviews completed on time, and in the year to the end of October 2014, the IRO team had completed 1725 reviews. Review minutes needed to be distributed within 20 working days of a review, and work was required around this as not all the team were meeting the target.

Work was currently taking place around a Quality Assurance document to look at the care and placement plans as it had been identified that there was a large variation across the county in the ways these were completed. All children and young people were given the opportunity to complete a consultation paper prior to each review, and these were currently being revised. They were also encouraged to attend and participate fully, and it was the intention to make separate contact with children between reviews. There had been an improvement in the part played by IRO's in care proceedings, and the protocol with CAFCASS had been signed off and was being embedded in practice. Issues remained about the IRO's routinely having access to the court papers.

The way the review minutes were written had received good feedback, and the aim was to make the review minutes part of the child's story. The team was currently developing a Quality Assurance document to improve the consistency in the way the team wrote the review minutes. The IRO service had a robust dispute resolution protocol, and information had been collected about the escalation of concerns IRO's had identified. From January-September 2014, there had been 53 instances of IRO's passing their concerns to district manager level and one where the second stage of the formal dispute resolution had been raised. It was the intention to look at the impact of the escalations.

There remained challenges in ensuring consistency across the county, and much of the work in preparation for a review was completed at district level. It was difficult to guarantee that all children, carers and parents were receiving good information in a timely way. There was only one temporary manager for an increased team, and this put pressure on maintaining good levels of professional supervision and quality auditing – this remained a key target in 2015. Details were provided of the work that the team had been focussing on.

11/15 UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY AS AN UNDERPINNING FRAMEWORK FOR THE CAYA WORKFORCE The Social Pedagogy Strategy had been endorsed in December 2014 along with an implementation plan. The strategy aimed to ensure that the development of knowledge and practice within all staff was supported, that social pedagogy practice was given the opportunity to flourish in all services, and that social pedagogy as an approach was sustainable over time within CAYA. The strategy highlighted the aspiration for social pedagogy to be widely adopted and to develop to become inherent in all areas of children's services.

Critical to this was the need for staff to become involved in the transformation, and this required support from Senior Management, and all staff needed to be supported. A Social Pedagogy Strategy Group had been

established to ensure the strategy's aims were prioritised by all CAYA and to address any barriers to the rollout of social pedagogy.

A range of work was already underway. There was currently a children's home residential steering group and a fostering steering group, and these focused on grassroots developments in social pedagogy and how they approached it in their service areas. Other service area groups were in development. A bimonthly newsletter – the Social Pedagogy Gazette – had been established and was currently distributed via 'CAYA all' emails. There was an internal two day introduction to social pedagogy course, and for the last two years, the Uni-fi initiative had funded four groups of 25 people on a level 4 introduction to social pedagogy course at the University of Derby. An evaluation was currently being undertaken to measure the impact of the course, and Uni-fi was due to launch an innovation fund which would support new ideas and innovative practice from throughout the workforce to further support social pedagogy development. A session on social pedagogy was being delivered at each CAYA induction for new staff, and new workforce development approaches were being trialled to encourage staff to embrace social pedagogy as a means of improving their practice and outcomes. An e-learning programme aligned with the systemic training for social workers and the Safer Children Stronger Families initiative had been developed and this was likely to be mandatory training once finalised. Information on social pedagogy was being developed on DNet.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

12/15 **CONFERENCE** The Children in Council was working on a Total Respect Conference, to be held in May, and this would focus on young people's views on a range of issues. The date would be circulated once it had been finalised.

The Virtual School Sharing event was due to be held on 18 April and the Big Book Bash was to be held on 19 July.