

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Wednesday, 20th July, 2016

Present:- Councillor Watson (in the Chair); Councillors Watson, Clark, Cusworth, Elliot, M. Elliott and Sansome.

Also present:- Mel Meggs (Deputy Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services), Sue Wilson (Performance and Quality Manager), Deborah Johnson (Performance Assurance Manager), Collette Bailey (IYSS), Anne-Marie Banks (Fostering), Rebecca Wall (Safeguarding and QA) and Karen Holgate (LAC Nurse, Rotherham CCG)

D8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

D9. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7TH JUNE 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2016 were agreed as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

D10. CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Deputy Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services introduced a report which provided a summary of performance in relation to services for Looked After Children at the end of April 2016. It was noted that the report should be read in conjunction with the performance data report which detailed trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour average.

The following areas of good and improved performance in the previous twelve months were noted:

- Caseloads continued to be consistently at manageable levels for workers across the service
- Although further improvement work was needed on Health and Dental assessments, performance in April 2016 for Health Assessments was 90.9% and Dental was 90.5% which for Dental represented a further improvement on the previous month.
- 99% of Looked After Children had their review undertaken in timescale
- 99% of eligible Looked After Children had a pathway plan

Whilst recognising that good and improved performance, the following areas required further improvement:

- There was a shortage of adopters which had impacted on the

number of completed adoptions, with two taking place in April

- Although Looked After Children visits against local standards stood at 77.2% in April, it did not reach the local target of 90%. Performance against national minimum standards for April was good at 97.7%
- The number of Looked After Children who had three or more placement moves was still too high. Whilst the percentages were in line with national averages, the numbers were inconsistent with the aspirations for all children in care to benefit from a stable placement
- There were too many care leavers who were not yet engaged in education, employment or training so there would be a renewed focus on that in the coming twelve months
- Audits identified that the quality of practice for Looked After Children needed to improve.

In response to a query in respect of whether caseloads levels for social workers were reasonable, it was explained that each social worker had a range from 15 to 20 cases in operation on average in Rotherham. It was noted that the caveat behind that statistic was that it did not give any background to the intensity of that casework. It was noted that a social worker could have one large case or many little ones up to 25. It was explained that where social workers were newly qualified, they would have a protected level of caseload.

It was further noted that the number of health and dental assessments were improving and whilst there were no system failures, there were high levels of refusals that needed to be investigated further. It was explained that hospital settings could be a reason for putting young people off, but it was planned that the LAC Council would be asked for ideas to encourage attendance at assessments.

It was reported that the service continued to achieve reviews and visits on time and develop pathway plans. Whilst there were high levels, it was explained that the quality of each review would be at a level to which the authority aspired. It was noted that the quality of what was recorded needed to improve so that the child had a full record of what had happened in their life.

It was expressed in respect of the number of children having placement moves because there was not enough of the right type of care. It was recognised that further work was required to ensure that the right type of placements were secured.

Specific reference was made to the needed for more foster carers to foster teenagers. It was noted that since March 2016, there had been 8 resignations or retirements amongst foster carers, but there had been 15 approvals for new foster carers, which represented a small net gain. It

was agreed that the Council needed to be smarter in how it recruited and there was recognition that the historic position was one where foster carers were fostering too many children. There were currently high numbers of foster carers that only foster one child and it was considered unusual to have such low placements. It was explained that a number of foster carers only had one bedroom and so had been restricted to baby cases. There were also a high number of cases that remained in foster carer homes beyond the age of 18, but that had meant that foster carers could not take any other children at that point because of lack of space in their homes.

In response to a question in respect of what work was being done to encourage care leavers to engage in education, employment or training, it was explained that 99% of Looked After Children at the age of 16 engage in education, employment or training. Issues tended to arise when they reached the age of 18 and enter the world of work and this had been identified as an area requiring significant work to prepare Looked After Children for the world of work. It was noted and welcomed that the Chief Executive had identified the need to prioritise apprenticeships for Looked After Children within the Council.

It was also noted that work had been undertaken in the past with companies from which Council procures services or products and Looked After Children had entered apprenticeships with those businesses.

In response to a query about how 'edge of care' arrangements could be strengthened, it was explained that the intention was for children to return home or make alternative plans with the intention of preventing children from coming into care. The preferred approach was to provide family therapy or alternative support through family group conferencing and NSPCC reunification work.

Agreed:- That the performance report be noted.

D11. ROTHERHAM LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S COUNCIL (LACC) - CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - UPDATE REPORT MAY - JUNE 2016

Consideration was given to the update from the Looked After Children's Council (LACC) which had enjoyed another exciting, busy and productive period during May and June 2016.

It was noted that the LACC had positively influenced the consultations on the Children in Care Strategy, Libraries and Customer Services Survey and had developed the 'Have Your Say' Children in Care Annual Peer Consultation. The group had also worked together to host a careers event at the LACC and supported the Armed Forces Day celebrations on 25 June 2016.

The Panel was pleased to note the LACC's involvement in 'Rotherham's

Got Talent 2016', the open evening for young people in care interested in a career in the Armed Forces with the Rotherham Military Community Veterans Centre and preparations for the Pride of Rotherham Awards in September.

D12. WORK PROGRAMME 2016-2017

Consideration was given to the Panel's Work Programme for the 2016/17 municipal year, which detailed the items to be considered at meetings for the remainder of the year.

The Deputy Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services indicated that future agendas for the Panel would include the following standing items:

- Children in Care Performance Report
- Independent Reviewing Officer Escalation Report
- Strategic Directors' report
- Looked After Children Nurse Update
- Virtual School Update
- Improvement Plan Progress

In addition to these, the following items would be reported to the Panel on an annual basis:

- Sufficient Assessment Review
- Looked After Children Council Annual Report
- Children's Rights Advocacy Annual Reports
- Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report
- Care Leavers Annual Report

The Panel indicated that it was keen to know if Rotherham MBC had placed children in care outside of the borough and what kind of care they had compared to what was offered in Rotherham. It was explained that Rotherham was an overall net importer of children. The law required the Council to be notified when children come into the borough through provision in the independent sector. Where the Council places outside of the borough, it may have done so in order in to address issues particular to the case which might mean that it would not be beneficial to the child to remain within the borough.

In considering this item, the Panel welcomed an update from the Looked After Children Nurse who explained that when children come into care, there is an expectation that a medical would take place within 20 days. In doing that there was a significant amount of work to be done which would involve talking to parents for consent, arranging for the social worker to be present, establishing the child's health history and parents' history too, which necessitated GP involvement. The health plan needed to be returned to social care after the assessment.

It was explained that some children have significant health challenges. If a child is under 5, health visitors undertake the health review assessment, whereas school nurses undertake assessments for those children and young people between the ages of 5 and 18.

D13. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: -

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 27 September 2016 at 5.00pm at Rotherham Town Hall.