

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday 23 November 2021

Present:- Councillor Cusworth (in the Chair); Councillors Bird, Browne, Collingham, Cooksey and Griffin.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Pitchley and Yasseen.

21. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2021.

Resolved:-

1. That the minutes be approved as a true and correct record.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest.

23. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.

The Chair confirmed there was no reason to exclude members of press or public from observing any of the items on the agenda.

24. PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY

Consideration was given to a report setting out the Council's recent response to the need for sufficient placements for Looked After Young people. The goal of this work was to be able to feed back to the young people the commitment of corporate parents to provide high-quality residential placements close to home. This overall development responded directly to Rotherham Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) strategic intention to reduce the number of external residential placements and ensure more Rotherham looked after children (LAC) and young people are placed within borough close to their family and community networks. The new provision, along with foster care, third party placements, semi-independent provision, and other family-based placements, will provide a mixed economy of arrangements which sought to effectively meet Rotherham's statutory duties, outlined in the Sufficiency Strategy 2019 - 2022.

In discussion, Members expressed interest in how the use of IFA (Independent Fostering Agencies) compares with that of statistically similar or neighbouring authorities. It was noted that this benchmarking would be provided in a future meeting.

Clarification was also requested around the use of the phrasing describing placements as "interventions not destinations." This was explained as reflecting the practice of reviewing placements for each individual to

determine if they are still appropriate and still the best way to support the individual young person toward the best outcome for them.

Members requested further detail around challenges or hurdles that are commonly encountered in the process of trying to achieve the best outcomes, for example, were there special guardianship orders that can be mired in court processes and hard to obtain? The response from officers described the robust tracker system that the service regularly scrutinised and updated to achieve their ambitious outcomes. The tracker occasionally revealed trends that the service then responded to, such as if a trend emerged around a certain age group, the service responded by having robust conversations with foster carers around the options for staying put. Where there are complex court procedures involved, the tracker provides an overarching point of view whereby strategic decisions could be made because the service knows the children well.

Resolved:-

1. That the report be noted.

25. CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report providing a summary of performance for key performance indicators across Looked After Children (LAC) services. It was considered in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report (Appendix 1) which provided trend data, graphical analysis, and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages where possible.

In discussion, an update on health assessments was also provided and it was noted that COVID had presented delays to some health assessments. It was observed that sibling groups are often the ones to encounter delays due to logistics, holidays, and COVID. It was noted that the specifics of the narrative around each case were known to the service.

Information around Looked After Children who come into contact with the criminal justice system was also requested to be reflected visibly in future performance reports, with a view to reducing the number. Emphasis was placed on the importance of developing a local protocol based on national protocol to reduce criminalisation of children.

Resolved:-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That future performance reports include LAC cases open to the Youth Offending Team (YOT).

26. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

27. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chair announced the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel would take place on 15 February 2021 at 3.30pm.