

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 31 January 2023

Present:- Councillor Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Cooksey, Andrews, Atkin, Aveyard, Bacon, Bennett-Sylvester, Z. Collingham, Elliott, Griffin, Haleem, Hughes, Jones, McNeely and Mills.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors .

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

48. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2022

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 6 December 2022 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

50. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items of business on the agenda that required the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

52. COMMUNICATIONS

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People confirmed that the Looked after Children had been receiving free swimming at leisure centres since 9 January 2023.

53. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - UPDATE

The Chair confirmed that leisure passes, and gym memberships were now available for the Council's Looked after Children.

54. ONE ADOPTION SOUTH YORKSHIRE - ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

The Chair welcomed Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Stephanie Evans, Head of Service for One Adoption South Yorkshire, and Monica Green, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care to the meeting.

The Head of Service, One Adoption South Yorkshire introduced the report and presentation, making the following comments:

- It was the first full year annual report to be presented as the regional adoption agency was created in January 2021.
- The annual report had been written in May 2022.
- The focus for the first year had been to identify the available resources and capacity within the four teams who were coming together.
- It was now at the end of its second year with the service structures established and practitioners appointed to key posts.
- There were new agency advisers, new panels, new service managers covering the three key areas of an adoption service, ensuring more balanced teams.
- A task for the third year of operation was to establish a single set of practice standards and procedures across the service.
- In terms of performance and outcomes, the service had a target of recruiting ninety-two adopters each year to meet the needs of the children.
- The number of potential adopters had fallen due to financial pressures; however, South Yorkshire had more adopters than children to place.
- It was felt that the target for placement of children of 154 each year was not right although the four authorities were regularly placing around 130 children each year.
- There had been a drop in the number of children where adoption was the plan over the last two years.
- One of their aims was to place children within South Yorkshire where they were able to support new families most effectively.
- At least a third of their work was around adoption support with over one thousand adopters across South Yorkshire eligible for adoption support.
- Adoption support was a key area however tracking was challenging. A new case management system would assist enabling a better understanding where and what support was accessed and needed.
- There were over four hundred active individual cases across South Yorkshire.
- The figures specifically for Rotherham showed there had been a dip in the number of people approved to adopt in 2021/22. The represented people who had started the process but not completed it for several reasons, some of which were financial.
- Seventy-three percent of children from Rotherham were placed within South Yorkshire.
- The key aims for year three were to speed up the time taken to find suitable adopters for children who needed families.
- It was noted that sometimes delays in the process were due to court delays leading to lengthy waits to be placed and sometimes the plan changed away from adoption.
- The service collaborated with the fostering teams to develop

relationships with those who would like to foster or adopt.

In response to questions raised during discussions the Head of Service, One Adoption South Yorkshire, the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care, and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Services, made the following responses:

- There were more older children who required adoption than babies and boys were harder to place with families.
- There was a need to modernise the adoption process to show the children that they could gain an extended family through the process.
- The fostering and adoption services worked together to build good working relationships between the foster carers and adoptive parents, in terms of arranging visits etc, to enable the adoptive parents to get to know the child more.
- It was confirmed that One Adoption South Yorkshire worked closely with other voluntary adoption agencies focusing on what was right for the child and family.
- Information of the percentage of children from within Rotherham that were placed with adopters within Rotherham could be provided.
- Joining the four teams together had been positive and good practice was being shared across all areas.
- Thirty two percent of Special Guardianship Orders within Rotherham ended with a family placement.
- Some performance targets might be missed but this was to ensure that the right placement was found for that child.
- In terms of the performance targets, it was explained that these were small numbers, so one child could make a dramatic difference to the figures. The case management system would be able to monitor this once in place.
- Further engagement and discussions with local communities about adoption would help to cultivate a more diverse set of adopters and the knowledge of ward councillors could be used to help build on that engagement.
- It was clarified that in terms of the budget arrangements, each of the four areas had contributed what they were spending on adoption services at the time the joint service was created.
- When adopters came forward, they were assigned an assessor, who worked with that family until approval was granted and for the first year. After the year had concluded the family was eligible for adoption support but did not have a specific person supporting them.
- The first thing that was considered if an adoption broke down was the adoption support plan and work was undertaken with the families to attempt to rebuild relationships if possible.
- Practical advice and guidance were offered to adopters on how to support the child around connection with the birth parents as children had a natural curiosity to discover where they came from.

- If was confirmed there were safeguarding procedures that could be put in place if needed, in terms of protecting children.

The Chair thanked all for their attendance for this item.

Resolved:

That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

1. Noted the One Adoption South Yorkshire Annual Report for 2021-2022.
2. Agreed that information be provided on what percentage of children from within Rotherham were placed with adopters within Rotherham.
3. Agreed that information be provided on the number of adoption breakdowns that occur within Rotherham.

55. UPDATE REPORT ON POST CSE SUPPORT SERVICES

The Chair welcomed Helen Sweaton, Joint Assistant Director, CYPS and Anne Charlesworth, Head of Public Health Commissioning to the meeting, noting that Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People had remained in attendance.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People explained that the review had been completed with eight recommendations, all of which had been completed.

The Joint Assistant Director, CYPS and the Head of Public Health Commissioning introduced the report and made the following points:

- Work was being conducted to understand the providers and explain how the pathway would work.
- Contracts with providers would be reviewed during the year.
- It was understood that the trauma and resilience pathway worked in a separate way to others therefore a roadmap had been created to ensure support could be accessed as and when needed.

In response to questions raised during discussions the Joint Assistant Director, CYPS and the Head of Public Health Commissioning, and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Services, made the following responses:

- Elective Home Education was monitored to ensure it was only selected when it was the right option to be used.
- It was confirmed that support was available for all genders.
- A lot of work was undertaken within the community and not all the information provided was Council branded however that did not prevent people from accessing services.
- In terms of understanding those who had disengaged with the service, the trauma and resilience service would take ownership of this.

The Chair thanked those in attendance and praised the content of the report. She also clarified that this would remain on the Commissions work programme.

Resolved:

That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

1. Noted the completed actions.
2. Agreed to add an update from the Trauma Resilience Service on Post-Abuse support to the forward plan, to be considered at the same time as the CCE Annual Update.

56. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme. The Chair highlighted that the work programme was under review to ensure topics were being considered at the most suitable time.

Resolved: That the Work Programme for 2022/23 be approved.

57. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES

The Chair provided a progress report on sub and project group activity.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

58. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

59. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved: That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission would take place on Tuesday, 7 March 2023, commencing at 10am at Rotherham Town Hall.