

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday 12 September 2023**

Present:- Councillor Cusworth (in the Chair); Councillors Browne and Z. Collingham.

Also in attendance:- Lynda Briggs, Nicola Curley, Laura Gough, Monica Green, Jo Hacking, Justine Hirst, Tina Hohn, Joanne McCartan, Jane Wood and Cathryn Woodward.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillor Pitchley, Lisa Duvalle and Anne Hawke.

93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pitchley, Lisa Duvalle, and Anne Hawke.

94. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:- The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th June, 2023, were agreed as a true record.

It was noted that the Looked After Council's Summer Festival had taken place and been a great success despite the weather. Some learning had been taken away from the day and considered for next year's event.

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

96. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items on the agenda requiring the exclusion of any press or members of the public.

97. FOSTERING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Monica Green, Assistant Director Children's Services, gave a brief verbal update on the current position with regard to the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

In the last year, the Authority would show a net gain (approximately 12) in the number of foster carers with a high proportion of foster carers transferring from IFAs.

The Chair reported that the Cabinet Member Working Group was

ongoing; once the work had been completed it would be reported to the Panel.

Resolved:- That the update be noted.

98. THE REVIEW OF FOSTERING PANEL

Monica Green, Assistant Director Children's Services, gave a verbal update on the review of the Fostering Panel which had been very positive finding that the Panel was very effective and well attended.

There was a small number of recommendations one of which was that the Panel Advisor be paid accordingly. This was currently being considered by the Directorate Leadership Team.

There was also no legal requirement for Elected Members to sit on the Panel. Members had continued to be part of the membership during recent years to retain oversight, however, it was a huge time commitment. The Corporate Parenting Panel/Board was to increase its number of meetings with Elected Members encouraged to participate.

A meeting was to take place with the Assistant Director Legal Services to discuss the Fostering Panel as well as others and how they linked operationally. Consideration will be given to asking Internal Audit to review it and submitted to the Audit Committee.

Resolved:- That the update be noted.

99. PERFORMANCE ON A PAGE

Cathryn Woodward, Performance and Business Intelligence Manager, presented the submitted report which provided a summary of performance for Key Indicators across Looked After Children Services for Quarter 1 2023/24. It also included a summary of Service performance in comparison to the same period in 2022/23 and trend data, graphical analysis and the latest benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages (where possible). The following was outlined:-

- The number of children entering care was slightly lower than the previous year
- 92.1% of eligible Looked after Children had an up-to-date plan. This was a slight decrease on the year's performance, with the aimed target being 95%
- 77.1% of placements were family based, this was a 2.9% decrease on last year.
- 67.8% of Looked after Children were in a stable placement for 2 or more years, this was slightly higher than the previous year
- There were currently 112 in-house foster families, with 3 new

approvals throughout the year. There had been 2 de-registrations, 5 less than last year

- It was noted that 10 Looked after Children were known to the Youth Justice Team.
- 7 children had been adopted, which was a decrease by one compared to the same period in the previous year
- The overall percentage of Looked after Children who had an initial health assessment within timescale had decreased in comparison to the previous year and 82.7% had up-to-date health assessments
- Dental assessments had improved compared to the previous year - 80.2% (improvement of 8.1%)
- 91.8% of reviews were completed within the timescale set, this was a slight reduction to the previous year. 94.4% of visits were up-to-date and within timescales of the national minimum standard
- At the end of quarter four, there were 331 young people in the care leavers cohort which showed an increase of 29
- 78.9% of care leavers had an up-to-date pathway plan at the end of the quarter and 96.1% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation. 71.9% of care leavers were in education, employment, and training
- 54 young people had been discharged from care at the end of quarter 1, down 3 on the previous year

Tina Hohn, Virtual School Head Teacher, reported that, because educationally they measured on an academic term, the outputs could sometimes be slightly different when they were captured. The Virtual School had 2 levels as their plans ranged from birth to 18 years. From birth, 99.6% of the PEP meetings had taken place and 100% for school age children.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Care leavers not in suitable accommodation – the Authority provided good accommodation that was suitable for care leavers, however, some choose to seek alternative accommodation that the Service would not consider suitable but not necessarily unsafe/dangerous. Also some adults were difficult to get hold off to find out where they were staying
- EET – what support was available around transport costs? The Service knew that it supplemented some of it and it would never be a barrier to young people accessing education. It was hoped to discuss a possible pilot scheme with bus companies
- Initial Health Assessments – in the early part of the year there had been quite a lot of unaccompanied asylum seeker children. They were offered a double slot because of the interpreting needs etc., however, for some it was the third attempt before they actually attended resulting in a number of wasted slots. The young people had been offered appointments within the set timescales but were out of time by the time they actually attended

The Chair thanked officers for the comprehensive report and for highlighting key performance areas.

Resolved: - That the report and the accompanying dataset be received.

100. THE STATEMENT OF INTENT FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

Monica Green, Assistant Director Children's Services, reported on the intended process for the reviewing the Corporate Parenting Strategy which was significantly overdue. It was the intention to refresh the Strategy in 2023 to cover 2024-2027.

It was critical that there was engagement with all key stakeholders to ensure a co-produced Strategy outlining how the Council would meet the needs of their cared for and care experienced young people.

The draft Strategy would be presented at the Corporate Parenting Board in December 2023 and Cabinet early in 2024 outlining how the Council would fulfil its corporate parenting responsibility.

Tina Hohn, Virtual School Head Teacher, reported that the Virtual School had an agreed permanence plan for each child and worked with the Adoption/Fostering Teams and Early Years. Ofsted had commented that they had liked the ability to see the full picture.

Resolved:- That the position statement be noted.

101. THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER REPORT

Joanne McCartan, Service Manager Safeguarding, gave the following powerpoint presentation highlighting:-

- IRO outcomes
- Quality assurance
- Children's participation in reviews
- Health of Looked After Children
- Education of Looked After Children
- Placement stability
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- Adoption
- Key actions for 2023-24

Attention was drawn/discussion ensued on the following:-

- The IRO Service had delivered 1,600 reviews, 91.7% in timescale
- 94.8% of children had an up-to-date care plan. Care plans should be updated within 10 days of the LAC review. This was tracked by the IRO
- 41.8% of children who had been LAC 6 months or more had had

a Midway Review. This was a decrease of 67.5% from 1st April, 2022

- 273 children had been visited within the last 6 months (52.7%)
- The voice of the child was central to IRO practice. Visits were explored in supervision with each IRO to ensure there was planning around this. For those children that might not want to see their IRO, alternative ways of ensuring the voice of the child was being explored. One IRO had developed refreshed booklets to try and encourage children to record their view for their review
- An escalation dashboard was being worked up and would feature in the 2023/24 annual report
- Quality assurance provided the opportunity to ensure that the Local Authority was carrying out its duties to those children it looked after. IROs independence was key to holding the Local Authority to account
- IROs had several avenues for progressing plans and ensuring oversight i.e. IRO footprint
- Where there were concerns that a child's care journey was drifting or serious concerns about the standard of care and Social Work intervention, the IRO will most commonly revert to a formal escalation
- 163 escalation discussion case notes were recorded. 95 formal escalations raised. All of these were resolved at either stage 1 or 2. The overwhelming rationale for the escalations related to drift and delay including no pre-meeting reports, delay in discharge of orders, assessment not completed timely or delay in important work such as life story
- Children and young people encouraged and supported to attend their reviews with some feeling confident to chair them themselves
- IROs encouraged to speak with the child prior to the review to discuss venue, attendees and what they wanted to discuss. IRO visits had increased since the pandemic
- Face-to-face meetings were now standard practice unless the voice of child indicated another preference
- The Service worked close with the Rights 2 Rights Advocacy Services to ensure that those children who required/requested an advocate were supported and heard in the process
- 656 children had felt able to attend the reviews and speak for themselves. The focus for the next 12 months was how to increase attendance at their LAC reviews
- 376 children had an up-to-date Health Assessment (93.1%), 28% did not have a Health Assessment (6.9%), 11 assessments were refused and 150 Initial Health Assessments were carried out and of those 59.3% were within the 20 days timescale. There was a need to be clear as to why a child refused a health assessment as there was currently no recording system to identify why a health/dental assessment had been refused
- 350 children had a recorded up-to-date dental assessment

(86.6%), 54 young people (13.4%) did not have an up-to-date appointment

- 96.7% of children had an up-to-date PEP
- Placement stability had decreased by approximately 6%; 142 out of 220 children who had/had been in placement for over 2.5 years
- During the year 536 new placements had commenced with 354 of those being placement moves i.e. for children already in Local Authority care. 9.96% (54) young people experienced placement instability of 3 years or more
- The IRO maintained oversight of placement instability and the impact on the child, reviewing changes in placement and raising appropriate escalations if necessary
- As at 31st March, 2023, the Local Authority had 36 children in its care who were considered to be unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Combining with those that turned 18 and were part of the Learning Care Service, this increased to 66
- All of these young people were subject to Section 20 Agreements
- A slight reduction had begun to be seen with 39 presenting at the beginning of the year to 36 in March 2023
- There had been 24 adoptions in the period concerned
- A lot of work had been done with Social Workers in the last 6 months trying to enforce the importance of reports submitted before the review meeting. Reviews were now stood down if a report had not been received and formal discussion would be entered into followed by escalation if the completed report was not received prior to the review
- Work was also taking place on developing a care plan and looking at the assessment and pre-review report for LAC to make it child focussed and not as long
- The Authority had a really good voice of the child offer but consideration was being given as to how that could be restructured and give a holistic picture and the wider care population

Resolved:- That the presentation and 2022/23 annual report be noted.

102. THE LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER REPORT

Joanne McCartan, Service Manager Safeguarding, gave the following powerpoint presentation highlighting:-

- 4 year comparison of LADO contacts
- Allegation types
- LADO outcomes
- LADO final outcome
- Development and awareness
- What needs to happen next

Attention was drawn/discussion ensued on the following:-

- A higher proportion of referrals progressed to a LADO investigation in 2022/23
- Effective multi-agency training regarding LADO threshold was ensuring appropriate referrals were being made
- The highest number of LADO's managed related to professional conduct issues which covered a wide range of concerns including behaviour outside of work as well as issues within employment
- The second highest was physical abuse and incidents where there was physical restraint and altercations often relating to those who worked closely with children e.g. residential carers, foster carers
- 82 concluded investigations in 2022/23 with 13.6% concluded with the member of staff still in employment with a risk assessment in place, 12.3% required further Safeguarding training/additional monitoring and training and 24.7% dismissed/resigned or suspended
- The "false" category was only added as an outcome in 2022/23 so information not available for previous years
- Referrals to DBS and regulatory bodies had remained consistent and proportionate. It reflected the 25.9% of workers who remained in post with a risk assessment in place or further supervision/monitoring/training
- Continued training provided to RMBC foster carers to support them to understand the role of LADO and the process when a referral was made as well as through the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership and attended by professionals
- RMBC inhouse residential children's homes offered support and guidance. A bespoke support package was in place during a very vulnerable young person's transition which assisted staff to consider what was a complaint vs what was an allegation
- The lead LADO in Rotherham and Sheffield had provided joint training with Assemblies of God Churches across South Yorkshire in November 2022
- Attendance at regular networking meetings with LADO staff from South Yorkshire as well as regional meetings with Yorkshire and Humberside
- Continued links with Yorkshire Sport Foundation and Diocesan Safeguarding to support safe practice

Resolved:- That the presentation and the 2022/23 annual report be noted.

103. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to report.

104. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Tuesday, 13th November, 2023, commencing at 2.00 p.m.