

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SCRUTINY SUB-PANEL

**Venue:** Town Hall, Moorgate  
Street, Rotherham.

**Date:** Wednesday, 24 September 2008

**Time:** 2.00 p.m.

### A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered later in the agenda as a matter of urgency.
3. Apologies for absence
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 12th December 2007 (copy attached) (Pages 1 - 5)
6. LAC Council (report attached) (Pages 6 - 7)
7. Exclusion of the Press and Public  
The following items are likely to be considered in the absence of the press and public as being exempt under those paragraphs, indicated below, of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended
8. Leaving Care and Accommodation Tender Outcomes (report attached) (Pages 8 - 11)  
  
(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act – information relating to financial or business affairs)
9. Inspection of Fostering Services (report attached) (Pages 12 - 16)  
  
(Exempt under Paragraph 2 of the Act – information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)
10. Looked After Children - Statistics and Regulation 33 Report (copy attached) (Pages 17 - 22)  
  
(Exempt under Paragraph 2 of the Act – information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

**Membership:-**

Chairman – Councillor The Mayor (Councillor G. A. Russell).

Councillors Austen, Dodson, Doyle, J. Hamilton, Jack, McNeely, P. A. Russell and Swift.

Together with Co-optees:- Mr. P. Howe, Mr. D. Trickett, Mrs. A. Lidster and Mrs. A. Wild

**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SCRUTINY SUB-PANEL  
12th December, 2007**

Present:- Councillor Gosling (in the Chair); Councillors Austen, Dodson, J. Hamilton, Jack and McNeely.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G. A. Russell, Akhtar and P. A. Russell.

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Agreed:- That the minutes of the meeting held on the 11th July, 2007 be received as a correct record.

**3. MATTER ARISING - VISITS TO RESIDENTIAL CENTRES AND MEETING WITH FOSTER CARERS**

Caroline Webb reported that suitable arrangements in respect of the above would be made in the near future.

**4. OFFENDING BY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

Paul Grimwood reported that in March 2007 information submitted to the Looked After Children Scrutiny Panel compared offending by Looked After Children in 2005 and 2006. The report was commissioned due to national and local concerns that children and young people who are looked after are at greater risk of offending than the general population with those individuals cared for within residential children's homes representing the higher percentage of children who are involved in offending behaviour.

Due to these concerns in respect of the residential population the report concentrated specifically on this group, and indicated an overall decline in frequency of offending by Looked After Children, particularly in residential care. However other placements did not appear to benefit from this trend, although less analysis for this group was available.

Panel members therefore requested a further examination of offending by Looked After Children outside of residential care. The report submitted further examines offending by both groups, and finds that offending by the residential population appears to continue to decline. For those in other placements it appears that those placed with parents and relatives are most likely to offend, but at a level not attracting a court sentence.

Trends in offending by Looked After Children should continue to be monitored, and consideration given to how pre court services can intervene with those placed outside of residential care.

The report set out in detail information in respect of :-

- Looked After Children offending who are in Residential Units
- Looked After Children who are in other types of placement
- suggested actions

The figures quoted are accurate but represent a relatively small population from which to draw trends.

The Looked After Children population generally by virtue of their status will have many of the predisposing and situational factors associated with offending. They are more likely to, amongst other difficulties, leave school without qualifications, experience unemployment, and suffer both emotional and physical problems than the rest of the population. Therefore attempts to address their offending must be part of a series of measures to improve their life changes.

Particular reference was made to the suggested actions, including the benefits of Behaviour Management Plans and preventative measures undertaken.

It was noted that staff were being trained as necessary, taking into account initiatives in Behaviour Management Plans.

Agreed:- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That the actions outlined to further reduce offending by Looked After Children be supported.

## **5. WORK PLACEMENTS BY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

Simon Cooper submitted a report which outlined progress on the provision of work placements for looked after children within the Council.

Officers of the Get Real Team, the Bridges Team and Strategic Human Resources have been working together to identify and offer meaningful work placements for looked after children within the Council.

The report submitted set out :-

- the placement model
- lessons learned from an initial placement and future steps to be taken
- current activity in respect of :-

work placements

information for care leavers

raising awareness of the needs of looked after children with each Directorate

A failure to adequately champion provision of work placements at a senior management level could lead to reluctance within Departments to provide work placement opportunities. Work placements provide a potential avenue for some looked after children to secure mainstream employment and thereby avoid social and economic disadvantage, a failure to provide work placements will deny opportunities to overcome this disadvantage.

Subsequent comments referred to :-

- highlight information in respect of carers and looked after children as part of Care Leavers weeks
- ensure that the Authority is doing enough with regard to placements through continued awareness sessions
- the placement process to be linked to the Trident Scheme and involve interested youngsters well in advance with placements having regard to their interests
- involve school governors with looked after children in that there are identified governors with responsibility for looked after children issues

Agreed:- (a) That the progress on provision of work placements be noted.

(b) That further reports be submitted to future meetings of this Sub-Panel providing updates on activity and progress regarding placements.

(c) That a report on work placements for looked after children be submitted to the Children and Young People's Services Cabinet Member to support the action being taken.

## **6. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AFFECTING LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

Simon Perry reported on performance at the end of the 2nd Quarter 2007/08 against targets, with comparisons against 1st Quarter 2007/08 and 2005/06 All England top quartile authorities, for those indicators which relate specifically to Looked After Children.

Five performance indicators were reported this quarter for Looked After Children and a summary of each was set out in the report submitted as follows:-

Above Target

On Target

Below Target

Direction of travel for the indicators

It was reported that recovery plans were in place for those indicators

below target.

Comments on the report were made and referred to:-

- future reports to state simply where each indicator is i.e. above target, on target or below target
- the effect on indicators of courts closing during August
- the aim to ensure that those indicators below target will improve by the year end
- the present situation regarding appointments of qualified social workers
- concerns that there were targets to meet regarding adoptions

Agreed:- That the report be received.

**7. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PROFILE - INCLUDING ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

Consideration was given to the content of a report which indicated that as at 3rd December, 2007, Rotherham had 337 children in care.

The report submitted set out :-

- the number of children in the various types of care available
- placements by ethnicity
- themes and trends resulting from Regulation 33 visits to residential children's homes
- the school attendance record of children in care as at 26th October, 2007 along with commentary on reasons for them missing school

Agreed:- (a) That the report be received.

(b) That future reports include information as to whether those children absent from school were receiving any form of education.

**8. LEAVING CARE SERVICE AND CARE LEAVERS ACCOMMODATION SERVICE - TENDER OPTIONS**

It was reported that the contract between Rotherham MBC and NCH for management of Leaving Care and Care Leavers Accommodation service ends in April 2008. The service provision will require external tender and the report submitted set out the tender options available.

Developments in legislation, the commissioning market and service provision have provided a background for a review of service expectations which underpin a service review and proposals for amendments to the service under tender.

The Leaving Care service is subject to an external tender. As there are considerable benefits in management of this service by an external provider, that Rotherham MBC does not submit an in-house tender.

The Accommodation project is subject to a separate tender. The tender for this service would include the post 16 service provision currently operated in house (Hollowgate). An in house tender is submitted for this element of the service, to fully explore all options for Best Value in service provision.

It was noted that the matter had been submitted to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services for approval.

Agreed:- (a) That the report be received.

(b) That an update on the contract situation be submitted to a future meeting.

**9. AWARENESS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

Agreed:- That Simon Perry investigate ways by which ward members can be made aware of looked after children in their area.

**10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

This was scheduled for Wednesday 29th March, 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

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| <b>ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS</b> |
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|-----------|---------------------|---|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>Meeting:</b>     | <b>LAC Scrutiny Sub Group</b>                   |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Date:</b>        | <b>Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008</b> |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>Title:</b>       | <b>LAC Council</b>                              |
| <b>4.</b> | <b>Directorate:</b> | <b>Children and Young People's Services</b>     |

**5. Summary**

The Care matters agenda requires the development of a LAC Council. This report details the Local Authority proposals for the development of a LAC Council and a progress report on actions to date.

**6. Recommendations**

- **That the contents of the report are noted.**

**7. Proposals and Details****Background**

The Care Matters agenda contains a number of recommendations which will be incorporated into the forthcoming amendments to the Children Act 1989, due in 2009. An Action Plan and Implementation guidance has been published giving clear timescales for development

A key requirement is the development of a LAC Children's council who will meet with Directors and Elected Members in order to ensure their involvement in shaping and developing all aspects of our service to them. This should commence with the development of our "promise" to all our Looked After Children.

**Progress Report**

The responsibility for this development has been delegated to Brian Sampson, the Looked After Children's Activities coordinator, who is based within the Looked After and Adopted Children's Support Team. The youth service has also offered practical advice and support, especially from the Outdoor Activities coordinator and workers supporting the Youth Cabinet.

Brian has identified a group of Looked After Children who are keen to work with us on the development of a LAC Council.

Councillor Wright has identified a fund to allow this group to work with the Lindley Education Trust, Hollowford centre on a three year development programme. This programme will assist the Council to develop as a group, achieve recognisable



educational outcomes and participate in a range of enjoyable and stretching activities.

The council will be supported to develop their own agenda and make their own decisions about the operation of the group within a number of given outcomes. Work is in progress to finalise the required outputs and outcomes, however they will include discussion of the following-

## Outputs

- Attendance at an agreed number of meetings per year with Directors and Elected Members
- A means of responding to reasonable requests for their views from Directors and Elected Members
- A means of raising issues of concern with Directors and Elected Members
- A means of consulting with all LAC to ensure they represent all viewpoints
- Introduction of new members into the group, a means of ensuring that all LAC have the opportunity to apply for membership and that a fair system for electing members is developed and handover of the group to a new membership within a set timescale

## Outcomes

- Directors and Elected Members are informed about the wishes and feelings of LAC
- Service development is responsive to the wishes and feelings of LAC
- LAC Services are improved as a result

The group commence work with the Lindley Educational Trust in September and will present their work on our “promise” to them at a meeting with Elected Members and Directors at a date to be arranged in late October.

## **8. Finance**

This work will be managed within existing identified financial provision. There is the scope for the Lindley Educational Trust to work with the LAC Council members to apply for additional funding to support further developments if identified within this work.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

If this work is not progressed we will not be entering the spirit of the legislation, which will have negative impact on future Looked After Children Inspections

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

This has been written with reference to the Care Matters Agenda, Action and Implementation plans. Development of a LAC council will be a requirement from 2009 and will be incorporated into Ofsted inspections of LAC services.

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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