

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**  
**Tuesday, 27th September, 2016**

Present:- Councillor Sansome (in the Chair); Councillor Elliot.

**D14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Clark, M. Elliott and Watson and C. Bailey.

**D15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20 JULY 2016**

Agreed:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2016, be approved as a correct record.

**D16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

**D17. CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE REPORT - JULY 2016**

Ian Walker, Acting Head of Service, Children in Care, presented a report which provided a summary of performance in relation to services for Looked after Children at the end of July 2016. It was noted that the report should be read in conjunction with the performance data which detailed trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour average.

1.1.1. Table 1: performance highlights

<b>Good &amp; improved performance</b>	<b>Areas for further Improvement</b>
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<p>Caseloads continue to be consistently at manageable levels for workers across the service.</p> <p>Although further improvement work is needed on Health assessments, performance for July 2016 remains relatively stable at 91.6%</p> <p>The number of Looked After Children who had their review undertaken in timescale remains relatively stable at 96.6%</p> <p>Since April there has been an increase to 97.7% in July 2016 (from 96%) of eligible looked after children have a plan.</p> <p>In July 33% of children in care ceased to be looked after due to permanence eg Special Guardianship, Residence order or adoption.</p>	<p>The number of Looked After Children (LAC) visits against local standards has dipped in July to 74.1% this does not reach the local target of 90%. Performance against national minimum standards for July also fell slightly to 95%.</p> <p>The number of looked after children (LAC) who have had three or more placement moves is far too high at 12.2%. Percentages are higher than national averages and inconsistent with the aspirations for all children in care to benefit from a stable placement.</p> <p>There are too many care leavers (66.5%) who are not yet engaged in education, employment or training so there will be renewed focus on this over the next 12 months.</p> <p>Audits show that the quality of practice for looked after children needs to improve.</p>
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It was reported that there had been a gradual increase in the number of children in care since April 2016; at the end of July there were 442 children in care and was far higher than the national average. In July there was a rise by 12 children, with the number of children leaving care being lower than those being admitted to care.

The use of Family Group Conferences was being explored to ensure that any opportunities for children to remain within their families could be maximised.

'Edge of care' arrangements needed to be strengthened over time to prevent the need for children to come into care; developing the service formed a key strand of the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy. This was particularly the case in respect of adolescents entering the care system for the first time.

At the end of July, 70.2% (99 out of 141) long term Looked after Children had been in the same placement for at least two years. This placement

stability was better than the national average of 67%, however, it was important to be confident that what appeared to be stability was not in fact masking drift in planning for children. The Sufficiency Strategy identified that there were too many children placed in residential care; work was underway to address this.

12.2% (54 out of 444) Looked after Children had been in 3 or more placements in the last 12 months, this was above the national average of 11.0%.

Performance in relation to children who had had 3 or more placement moves in a year was still of concern particularly in relation to the numbers of children in care who had had missing episodes which counted against the Indicator. All children who had been missing or who were identified as being in 'unstable' placements were now subject to particular focus at 'Team Around the Placement' meetings. In the future they would also be considered as 'exceptions' in the fortnightly performance meetings. There remained much to do in order to strengthen the quality of practice in the Children in Care Service across the board.

Performance in relation to Health and Dental Assessments was very poor in previous years and had been the focus of concerted joint effort resulting in improvement in the last 12 months. In April performance was 91.6% Health Assessments and 89.7% for Dental Assessments.

The number of care leavers had fallen slightly since April 2016 from 192 to 185 in July 2016.

97.3% of young people were in suitable accommodation. It was understood that more needed to be done to enhance the quality of the accommodation available as well as increasing the range of choices for young people. Work was being undertaken to ensure the best provision was available to Rotherham young people together with increased planning via a 16+ Accommodation Panel.

66.5% of young people were in education, employment or training which, although above the national average (45%), was still very disappointing in terms of the aspirations for Rotherham young people. Work was underway to strengthen the offer to care leavers generally and priority would be given to tackling the need to support young people to be engaged in further education, training or employment.

Agreed:-

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a representative from the CAMHS be invited to the next meeting.

**D18. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STATUTORY HEALTH ASSESSMENTS**

Karen Holgate, Named Nurse, Looked After Children, reported that a recent review of Health Assessments had identified that 16 young people had declined their Health Assessment. Of the 16, 13 young people were over the age of 16 years, 10 had declined in previous years and 5 were living out of the Rotherham area. The remaining 6 young people continued to decline their Health Assessment, however, 5 had received their health passport. The young people were happy to engage and discuss their health needs in the context of the health passport but continued to decline a full Health Assessment.

It was apparent that the young person would be more likely to engage and participate in their healthcare if they had a named Health Worker from the start. The designated and Named Nurse for Looked After Children had arranged to meet with the LAC Council of which part of the discussion would be seeking their view on what else health professionals could do to improve uptake.

Early intervention and continuity of the health professional was likely to improve engagement as the child/young person became older with the expectation that a positive relationship would have been developed to ensure that health needs were being identified and addressed.

The Looked after Care Team in Rotherham planned to undertake a 6 months pilot of a similar process as had been described from the 1st October 2016. Due to the nurse capacity within the Team, there would be an 11 years plus criteria implemented where the Team would introduce themselves to the young people within 10 working days of them becoming a Looked after Child to introduce Health Services. A health questionnaire was being developed for use with those young people who declined their Health Assessment as a way of identifying any health needs in order to provide relevant support and services.

A full health assessment was conducted when a child became a Looked after Child and clarified that registered with a local dentist. All Looked after Children had full dental assessments within 20 days of coming into care.

There were no issues with regard to dental in Rotherham.

The distribution of health passports to Looked after Children and young people over the age of 5 years had commenced. It would be a rolling programme over the next 12 months where the health passports would be shared with the child/young person at their health assessment review.

Agreed:- That the report be noted.

**D19. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER ESCALATION REPORT**

This item was considered in conjunction with Minute No. 25.

**D20. STRATEGIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

It was noted that this was a new agenda item and was intended for the Council's Strategic Directors to attend and explain how their directorates acted as corporate parents. Ian Thomas, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services was in attendance and reported:-

~ A Peer Review, led by North Yorkshire, was to commence on 3<sup>rd</sup> October with feedback being received on 16<sup>th</sup> October. The Review Team was very experienced and high performing. The Lead reviewer was Peter Dyer from North Yorkshire. North Yorkshire was a Partner with the DFE.

~ The Looked after Children Team would be visited by Ofsted. The visit would be led by Tracy McCarthy who was part of the inspection team in 2014. Tracy would be able to see how much progress had been made from her previous visit but will want to know that the Service were aware of what the strengths/weaknesses were and there was a need to be very clear to how those gaps were to be addressed

Agreed:- That a report be submitted to the next meeting on the outcome of the Peer Review and Ofsted visit.

**D21. VIRTUAL SCHOOL UPDATE**

It was reported that it had been a very challenging year with regard to outcomes, as many of the assessments had changed from last year to this year. Key Stage 1 and 2 had changed and it was also noted that Key stage 4 reporting had changed, with the effect being that the school were no longer required to report on 5 A\* to C Grade. It would now be reported whether the child had A\* to C Grade in Mathematics and English.

In respect of reading, six out of nine pupils (67%) were at the age related expectation, which compared with 71% in all other schools in Rotherham. The figure in writing and maths was reported as being at 56%, which represented five pupils.

At Key Stage 2 the gap had continued and this was identified as an area of concern, with only 1 out of 3 achieving their grade. and this out of 24 pupils but half of them have statements or Education Health care plans. 6 of these children are attending special schools and will never be entered for these exams.

At Key Stage 3, 9 out of 18 for reading which represented 50% at Virtual School against 64% for Rotherham Schools and for writing the position was 7 out of 18, which was 39% against 72% for Rotherham Schools. In

Mathematics it had dipped to six pupils which represented 33% against 78%. It was noted that Mathematics was a serious area for concern and then for reading maths together there are 5 pupils at 28% against 54%. It was reported that there was a lot of work to do and the service would target those children to give them help in order to catch up.

It was noted that the measures for Key Stage 4 had changed, with 10 out of 32 pupils being SEND or EHCP, it was noted 25% achieved an A\* to C Grade in English and 22% achieved an A\* to C Grade in Maths.

When compared to mainstream schooling in Rotherham, 38% achieved A\* to C Grade in English as opposed to 71% in mainstream schools and 38% as opposed to 75% in Mathematics. Looked after children had done well, but there was still a need to continue to improve.

It was reported that the Virtual School had developed a very strong relationship with school and PEP (Personal Education Plan) meetings had been very good. Schools were expecting to be challenged and were rising to that challenge. Tighter, focused plans were beginning to have an impact and feedback had been very positive. The model supported children in their out of authority placements as well, so someone attends every PEP meeting, wherever the child is, and it was noted that this was making a difference. It was reported that feedback indicated that other Authorities were not doing this.

**Agreed:-** That the report be noted.

## **D22. IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS**

It was reported that the Improvement Plan was based on the report from Ofsted in 2014 and followed the child all the way through their journey while in looked after care.

It was reported that the first Improvement Plan meeting since the summer would be held on 27 September 2016 and the Board would be recommended to formally agree the closure of eleven actions as complete. It was noted that evidence of progress had to be provided to demonstrate that closure was warranted.

It was noted that additional time would be required to achieve a number of other outcomes within the Improvement Plan, such as in respect of care leavers, which would be the focus of the next meeting with a view to making real progress before a future meeting.

**Agreed:-** That the update be noted.

**D23. ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ROTHERHAM THERAPEUTIC TEAM (1 APRIL 2015 - 31 MARCH 2016)**

Consideration was given to an annual report which provided a briefing on the business and activity within the Council's Therapeutic Team in 2015/16. The report provided performance and activity data on the service, reports on the activity and functioning of the therapeutic team, and details service delivery that has occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2016/17.

The team deliver therapeutic training courses to share best practice with carers and professionals, this includes

- 8 week Therapeutic Parenting Courses (Beek & Schofield Safe Base Model of Intervention)
- Bonding Through Play training (Theraplay Intervention)
- Life Story Work (Narrative Therapy)
- Transitions (Moving Children on to adoption)
- Living with Sexually Abused Children training
- Assessing sibling groups.

During the period 1 April 2015 - 31 March 2016, there were 511 referrals made to the team, which equates to 401 different young people. The team provided support to carers of 38 children who moved on to adoption, and this included support in preparing for permanence, supporting the foster carers and fostering team and the adoption team in the transition. The team assessed and made 33 applications to the Adoption Support Fund in this financial year, in relation to 28 adoptive families, providing £220k therapy for Rotherham's adopted children and parents.

The Therapeutic Team takes all referrals for looked after children who live local to the service; (within South Yorkshire). Tier 3 CAMHS service refer into the Therapeutic Team all families who have adopted children, children in care and children subject to SGO for support, assessment, therapeutic work and attachment interventions. Generally CAMHS will only continue to work with these families if there is a requirement for assessment of autism, ADHD and neuro-developmental delay. Partnership work between the therapeutic team and wider CAMHS provision also happens where there are more serious mental health indicators, such as significant self-harming attempts, psychosis and eating disorders. The team consults with and attends regular meetings with local psychologists across the hospital paediatric, RMBC and RDASH trusts to look at shared cases and also to agree appropriateness of interventions and lead agency with challenging and complex cases.

Rotherham's Therapeutic Team work alongside other agencies such as educational Psychologists, MAST counsellors in schools, Barnardo's CSE and sexually harmful behaviours services, Youthstart and other agencies including RISE. Nationally Rotherham's Therapeutic Team work

alongside the Clinical Commissioning Group, (CCG) to ensure that children living in different parts of the country receive CAMHS and other services as appropriate. The team also work closely with the RMBC commissioning team to ensure that therapeutic provisions (within IFA/residential placements) are fully delivered as contracted to ensure good quality service provision for all children in care, whether they are living

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There are no particular risks from the previous annual report. However, it was noted that there are ongoing risks to the emotional wellbeing of children in care and those who have left care if expansion is not achieved.

**Agreed:-** That the report be received.

**D24. ROTHERHAM ADOPTION SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015-2016**

Consideration was given to a report on performance and activity data within the service, reports on the activity and functioning of the Adoption Panel, and details service developments that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2016/17.

It was reported that the Adoption Service in Rotherham was made up of two teams, the recruitment team and the assessment team. The Adoption Service undertook the recruitment, assessment and approval of applicant adopters, family finds and matches children and approved adoptive parents, supports and supervises adoption placements and provides post adoption support services.

2015/16 SHOBPA decisions were made in respect of 46 children, 9 required supplementary work for the ADM to make the recommendation, but none were declined. In 2014/15, 49 SHOBPA decisions made.

Performance on recruiting prospective adopters who wish to adopt a looked after child has been maintained this year with a calendar of recruitment events throughout the year. The number of enquiries to the agency in 2015/16 was 97, compared to 100 enquires in the previous year. Once further information has been shared at an information event or visit the number of 'Registration of Interests' received has decreased from 51 in 2014/15 to 30 in 2015/16.

The average time between 'Registration of Interest' and 'Agency Decision' was 239 days. Since the introduction of the two stage process the timeliness for adopter assessments has continued to decline. The main delay is in Stage 1, due to delays in the returns of DBS checks. In addition adopters report that they are unable to obtain a timely appointment with their GP for the adoption medical. As Stage 1 is adopter led, the agency has less control over this stage. A number of adopters also choose to take a break between Stages 1 and 2 which impacts on the overall timeliness.

Timeliness for adopter approval has decreased nationally since the introduction of the two stage process. This has been mirrored in Rotherham Adoption Services with 46.6 % of adopter assessments being completed within the six month timescale in 2015/16.

Of the 43 children adopted, 16 were female and 27 were male. 38 children were of white British origin and 5 children were dual heritage. 9 children were sibling groups of 2 (18 children) and 5 of the children had disabilities. 7 children were aged 5 or over. 4 of the children of dual heritage were matched with families of appropriate culture, one child had complex health needs, and when matching was linked to a family, who did not share the child's heritage, but was skilled and experienced to meet the child's health and development needs.

**Agreed:-** That the report be noted.

**D25. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015- 2016**

The Annual Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) report reflected the compliance, progress and contribution the IRO Service had made to the

outcomes for Looked after Children in Rotherham and against required statutory legislation as set out in the IRO Handbook and Care Planning Regulations (amended 2015). This included quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO services for the period of 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2015 to 31st March, 2016.

Each Looked after Child or Young Person in Rotherham had an allocated IRO, which allowed the IRO to build a relationship with the child/young person, monitor progress between reviews and addressed any delay in implementing the child's care plan in a timely manner leading to placement stability and positive impact for the child. The IRO monitored the child's care plan between Looked after Reviews and was informed of any significant events within the child's life to ensure positive outcomes for Rotherham's looked after young people.

There had been ongoing change and development within the Rotherham IRO Team since 2010 including after the Ofsted (2014) inspection. In April 2015 agreement was given to support recruitment of additional IRO's to reduce the caseloads so that the Service could focus on qualitative measures to improve outcomes for looked after children. This included supporting IROs to visit children, establishing a rapport and developing a relationship to capture their voice, wishes and feelings in relation to their care plan. The additional IROs were also expected to increase the capacity of the Service to bring challenge and improve the oversight of the quality of children and young people's journey through care. Accordingly, 2 further IRO's (agency staff) were recruited during May whilst permanent recruitment was undertaken. The Team also experienced additional changes with 2 longstanding staff members leaving the Authority, bringing the overall number of agency staff to 4, in October 2015.

At the end of March 2016 there were 432 Looked after Children and 7.5 IRO positions (6 permanent and 1 agency) with average caseloads of 61.7 per IRO. The 0.5 IRO post was currently under review.

**Agreed:-** That the report be received.

## **D26. CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT**

It was reported that the Council's aim was to ensure that all young people leaving care are supported through their transition into adulthood and to give care leavers the same level of care and support that other young people receive from their parents.

The Leaving Care Service assist Looked After young people through the process of Leaving Care and provides, support and financial assistance to Rotherham Care Leavers. The Service is made up of Personal Advisors (PA's) and Social Workers who work with young people to assess their needs and agree any support they may need through a Pathway Plan.

It was noted that Rotherham has two dedicated Leaving Care Teams and

a Leaving Care Accommodation team which works with young people aged 16+. The teams are made up of qualified social workers, support workers and personal advisors, all experienced in working with and supporting young people. 225 young people are currently entitled to a Leaving Care Service from Rotherham; they are 100 that are over 18 years old.

Care Leavers face a number of challenges as they transition to independence. Pathway Plans play a key role in preparing young people leaving care in making sure young people have the support and skills and are prepared to live independently.

16 and 17 year olds have an allocated social worker within the looked after service and are jointly allocated a personal advisor from Leaving Care. Qualified social workers undertake the assessment of each eligible and relevant child (those under 18years). Where young people have left care but are over 18, personal advisors within the Leaving care team, overseen by a qualified social worker, review the Pathway Plan.

Young people must be involved in the preparation and review of their plan and their views, wishes and feelings should be included and listened to throughout. The plan is reviewed with them on a regular basis (at least every 6 months or sooner if requested by the young person or their needs have changed). The Plan must detail how these needs will be met and who is responsible for what and by when and should address the following:

- Accommodation
- Practical life skills
- Education and training
- Employment
- Financial support
- Specific support needs e.g. Health and Family
- Contingency plans for support if independent living breaks down

Personal advisors work with young people to establish a positive working relationship and to effectively support the young person in achieving the targets in their Pathway Plan. Personal Advisors are also responsible for making sure that young people have had an appropriate financial assessment and that they are supported to access benefits if they are not in employment or are in education/training which precludes them from benefits.

98.4% of Rotherham Care Leavers are in suitable accommodation which is well above the national average (77.8%) and higher than our statistical neighbour average (74.2%). A Suitable Accommodation checklist has been devised to assist PA's when assessing whether accommodation for care leavers is of a suitable standard

Accommodation costs for those under 18 are met by the Local Authority. Young people in care are encouraged to remain in a regulated placement as long as possible. Personal Advisors work with the young person to ensure that their accommodation is suitable and safe to live in and Care Leavers are given priority status on Rotherham's local housing register. When they are assessed as being ready for their own tenancy they will be supported to attend the Councils 'Moving On' panel which considers their application for housing and plans to make sure that appropriate support is in place to guide them through the bidding and allocation process. All young people accessing housing through this panel must agree to tenancy support for at least 3 months. Young people who progress to Higher Education are supported financially to ensure they are able to secure appropriate accommodation and living costs.

Young people who have been living in foster care and wish to remain beyond 18 years old can be supported under a Staying Put arrangement. Rotherham currently has 16 young people in Staying Put arrangements and a further 6 arrangements due to start within the next 3 months. Young people are able to maintain their Staying Put Arrangement so that they are able to return home during holidays and continue to be part of a family when they go to University. Below is an example of a young person who is being supported to attend University and continue within a Staying Put arrangement.

Agreed:- That the report be noted.

## **D27. PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY REPORT**

It was noted that, as of the end of July 2016, there were a total of 442 looked after children in Rotherham which reflected an ongoing upward trend.

These young people were placed in the following placement types:-

- 168 with In-House foster Carers
- 17 with Relatives or Friends on a kinship fostering basis in Rotherham
- 149 with Independent foster placements (IFA's)
- 47 with Out of Authority children's Homes (OoAs) placed in a Residential School
- 2 in a secure unit
- 1 in a Mother and baby unit
- 54 in a variety of other placements including pre-adoptive placements, independent living and living at home as part of a rehabilitation plan subject to the Placement with Parents Regulations.

In addition the lack of in-house provision had a discernible impact on the outcomes achieved by those young people. This was aggravated by the fact that 108 of these placements were more than 20 miles from their home address with 55 children being more than 50 miles and 2 children

more than 100 miles from their home address. These distances can make social worker and commissioning oversight of the placements difficult in terms of ensuring that the young person is receiving the services that have actually been commissioned such as therapeutic interventions, enhanced staff support packages, respite care etc. Furthermore, these placements bring with them a dependency on other agencies to provide for many of the other needs of the looked after young person including their education, non-teaching support, CAMHS intervention and health and dental treatment. There is evidence that some children from Rotherham are experiencing a limited or lower priority service from some other agencies in terms of having these needs met and this can have an impact on their outcomes.

To address the reliance on the IFA and OoA providers, Rotherham CYPS was developing its Sufficiency Strategy in order to increase the proportion of children in care placed within in-house provision.

There are 5 main strands to this Strategy:-

The Foster Carers Payments Scheme, Support and Development – by reviewing the way in which foster carers are financially rewarded and supported and trained it is hoped that we can increase the number of in-house foster carers by 15 fostering households (net) per annum.

The Rotherham Therapeutic Team Transformation – by enhancing and expanding the therapeutic support available to looked after children and their carers it is a reasonable assumption to make that less young people will suffer the series of placement disruptions that often culminates in them having to be placed with the private providers. In addition this should also reduce the need to place such young people in OoA 'Therapeutic Residential Placements' in order to have those therapeutic needs met.

This Transformation will be implemented in conjunction with the terms of reference for the Children with Complex Care Needs Panel being revised so that the Panel is more directed at developing multi-agency packages of enhanced support to enable more young people to remain placed in in-house placements.

Edge of Care – by developing a 'virtual' multi-agency team that can provide immediate support to families at times of crisis it is anticipated that the number of young people who are admitted to care via Section 20 of the Children Act (Voluntary Accommodation) will be reduced. This is especially relevant as most of these young people are adolescents for whom there is a shortage of placements in Rotherham making them more likely to end up placed with the private providers. This enhanced support package will include a significant investment in Family Group Conferencing which aims to identify and formalise the internal support mechanisms within family and social networks to enhance the resilience of parents and young people.

The Adoption Regionalisation – Rotherham is committed to the regionalisation of adoption services in line with the Government guidance on the issue. This programme should ensure that prospective adopters receive faster responses, better matching takes place, there is a quicker pathway from the Agency Decision Making regarding the suitability of a child for adoption to family finding being completed and that there is better post-adoption support. Within this programme Rotherham is looking to take the lead on Early Permanence Planning and the development of an integrated I.T. system.

The Taking Care Scheme – working in partnership with the NSPCC, Rotherham aims to support up to 30 young people to return to the care of their birth families over a two year period in a safe and supported manner. It is generally acknowledged that as looked after young people approach adulthood they tend to ‘drift’ back to the care of their parents. By formalising this process it is anticipated that it can be accelerated whilst at the same time reducing the risks of family relationships breaking down again in the future.

**Agreed:-** That the report be noted.

**D28. OVERVIEW OF CORPORATE PARENTING TRAINING FOR ELECTED MEMBERS**

This item was deferred to the next meeting due to the absence of a number of Members.

**Agreed:-** That the report be considered at the next meeting of the Panel.

**D29. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETINGS: -**

Tuesday 29 November 2016 at 5.00pm