

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday, 24th October, 2017

Present:- Councillor Watson (in the Chair); Councillors Clark, Cusworth, Elliot and M. Elliott.

Also present were Catherine Hall, Karen Holgate, Deborah Johnson, Peter McNamara, Janet Russell, Ian Thomas and Ian Walker.

Terri Roche and Jacqui Wiltshinsky were in attendance for Minute No. 30.

Lisa Duvalle, Kira, Emma, Brogan, Syke, Bella, Angelina, Ash and Steph were in attendance for Minute No. 31.

Apologies for absence were received from Mel Meggs .

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

27. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 22ND AUGUST, 2017

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22nd August, 2017, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

28. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE

Further to Minute No. 20 of the last meeting, consideration was given to the Panel's Terms of Reference which had been revised in accordance with the suggested amendments.

Resolved:- (1) That the Terms of Reference be approved subject to the correction of the spelling of Councillor J. Elliot.

(2) That attempts be made to secure representation from South Yorkshire Police, Mental Health, Housing and a foster carer on the Panel.

29. CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE - UPDATE

Housing

The Chair was to meet with the relevant Officers shortly.

Employment and Training Opportunities within Council Departments and with Partner Agencies

Councillor M. Elliott reported that he had met with Sharon Sandell, Service Manager, Leaving Care, who had provided an update as to the current position of LAC leaving care i.e. 3 young people were engaged with apprenticeships at Groundwork.

At the Highways Seminar on 3rd October he had asked a question regarding recent apprenticeship appointments and if any LAC had every applied or given the opportunity to do so. He had been advised on how apprenticeships were currently advertised and that a care leaver had applied at the last intake but had been offered an apprenticeship elsewhere.

He had also spoken to the Manager of Fortums who had agreed to meet next week to discuss the care offer. It was also hoped to set up a similar meeting with Mears.

Discussion ensued as to whether there was something that could be added to the essential criteria of the shortlisting process that would allow LAC to have an advantage. Consideration was being given to any apprenticeships that became available within the Council and partner agencies that care leavers be given the first option and the ability to apply with no competition from the wider community. At the point where the Care Leavers' Team said that no-one was appropriate the apprenticeship would then be offered to everyone

Health (including Mental Health)

Councillor J. Elliot reported that she was to attend a meeting of the LAC Physical and Emotional Health Workstream on 27th October followed by a meeting with the Health Team.

Educational Attainment and Access to Higher Education

The Chair was the Chair of the Co-ordinating Body of the Virtual School Team.

No progress had been made as yet with regard to access to higher education.

Foster Care Recruitment and Retention

Councillor Cusworth reported that general information regarding fostering and recruitment was included in the Performance Monitoring report.

She was waiting to set up a meeting with the Manager.

Response to those who go Missing

Councillor Clark reported that she had difficulty in ascertaining who the appropriate Officer was and was now awaiting to hear from them.

Resolved:- (1) That the updates be noted.

(2) That consideration be given to the raising of the issue with the Chamber of Commerce of care leavers being given the first option of any available apprenticeships.

(3) That a discussion take place at the Care Leavers Group with regard

to (2) above.

30. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PROMISES

Terri Roche, Director of Public Health, together with Jacqui Wiltschinsky, Public Health Consultant, informed the Panel of the work that her Service was providing in relation to Looked After Children which included:-

- Launch of the STILL Campaign (Stop Think Show Interest Listen Live Life) on 10th October, 2017 – World Mental Health Day. Terri thanked the LAC Council for helping to inform the Campaign in particular their advice on the design of the logo and messaging
- Ruth Fletcher-Brown was now working with the Different But Equal Board to refresh the My Mind Matters website
- Regular visits by Ruth Fletcher-Brown, Public Health Specialist, to the LACC on ethical participation
- Refresh of the Childhood Obesity Service and pathways which were now much closer linked to Safeguarding. There would also be records of the height and weight of Looked After Children which currently was not collected
- Funding bids had been submitted to work with LAC and their foster families to improve access to physical activities

Terri went on to describe work that was underway on the LAC Health Needs Assessment (HNA) working with colleagues at the Council and CCG. A HNA was a systematic method of identifying the unmet health and care needs of a population and making changes to meet those needs. A HNA reviewed the data to inform the recommendations and a successful HNA also heard from the community. It was planned to hold focus groups which would also seek to explore the experiences of LAC including hearing from young parents. The Needs Assessment would aim to provide a series of recommendations for the LAC Steering Group to take forward.

It was noted that discussions were taking place with regard to LAC and their foster carer/companion having access to Passport to Leisure cards. Attention was also drawn to the work of RUST and the Rotherham Titans with regard to LAC as well as changes to the Healthy Weight Services and some ideals linked to increasing physical activity across the Borough.

Terri and Jacqui were thanked for their presentation.

31. LACC CPP UPDATE JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2017

Kira, Emma, Brogan, Syke, Bella, Angelina, Ash and Steph, had chosen 5 items from their LACC update report to talk to the Panel about:-

Different But Equal Event

- LAC Council members involved in the consultation to design the event held at the Carlton Park Hotel

- Over 100 young people participated from across Rotherham
- LACC members promoted the LAC Council and engaged in African Drumming, sports, arts and crafts workshops as well as Voice and Influence activities to give their voices on a range of topics

Chill N Chat Cooking Session

- During August a special session was held to prepare and share a Pakistani meal by Kira. The meal was a great success

Town Hall Visit

- A visit had taken place to the Town Hall as guests of the Mayor Eve Keenan and her Consort which had included a tour of the Town Hall

Rotherham Show

- The LAC Council, together with other young people from Rotherham Youth Voice Groups, had actively engaged in the Show
- A 'Festival' theme had been used to attract children and young people to raise awareness about the LAC Council and the new Lac Club
- Sharon Kemp had joined in festival flower making

LACC Council Visitor

- Ian Thomas had visited 'the Journey' the new base at Chatham Villas
- Important issues to the young people had been raised regarding their care experiences including having too few foster carers, too many placement moves and changing Social Workers too frequently
- Ian had spoken about the improvements taking place in Social Care which should start to make an impact on the ground

This is NOT a Suitcase Campaign

The Panel was informed that children who were in foster care were expected to use a black bin liner to put all their clothes and special items in when they moved to different foster carers. The young people did not think this was acceptable and wanted every child in a placement to be given a suitcase.

This had been agreed some years ago but, with changes in management, it had become common practice once again. It was hoped this would be included in Policy to avoid this recurring in the event of management change.

Ian Walker reported that he had undertaken that, out of the budget for which he had responsibility, every young person in care would have 1 large suitcase or sports holdall, which ever was their preference, and then flat pack boxes available for the rest of their belongings.

Lisa Duvalle also drew attention to the review of the LAC and LC Corporate Priorities for 2017 which were:-

As your Corporate Parent we promise:-

- We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm
- We will listen to what you have to say and make sure it makes a difference
- We will help you to learn and do your best at school and college
- We will help you to be happy and healthy
- We will help you to learn new skills as you grow up and become an adult
- We will fully involve you in plans and decisions about you and your future
- We will help you take part in activities that you enjoy or that you are interested in
- We will help you to explore and be ready in the work of work
- We will help you to be proud of yourself and celebrate your individual beliefs

The LACC hoped that Elected Members and the Panel would sign the Promise.

Resolved:- (1) That the July to September, 2017 update be noted.

(2) That arrangements be made for all Elected Members, as Corporate Parents, be requested to sign the Promise prior to the 13th December Council meeting.

(3) That Corporate Parenting Panel members be given the opportunity to sign the Promise at the next Panel meeting.

(4) That Ian Walker give an update to the next Panel meeting on how many suitcases/sports holdalls had been issued.

32. CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE - SEPTEMBER 2017

Consideration was given to the report presented by Deborah Johnson, Performance Assurance Manager, Social Care, and supported by Ian Thomas, Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services, which provided a summary of performance for key performance indicators across Looked After Children Services. This was read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report at Appendix A detailing trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages where possible.

A Service overview and context was provided which indicated a continual increase in the Looked After Children profile and reasons for the increases, significant improvement in the timeliness of LAC reviews, improvement on 2016/17 outturn position with regard to Personal Education Plan and the quality of which, together with education planning, was beginning to have an impact on educational planning with Key Stage 2 outcomes improving in 2017 compared to 2016.

However, compliance against national minimum visiting standards had declined slightly over the summer but remained good given current Service context.

Rotherham's policy was to persevere in seeking adoptive placements for all children. However, 55% of children in the adoptive pathway process had been assessed as "hard to place". As a result, 1 adoption completed this year 1,624 days after the child became Looked After demonstrating the determination and perseverance of the Adoption Team. Although there had only been 13 adoptions in the first 6 months of 2017/18, a number were on stream to complete before the end of April and the Service was hopeful to surpass the 31 achieved in 2016/17.

The Panel sought clarification on a number of points including:-

- Dip in the number of visits conducted during the Summer holiday period – this was due to a combination of staff annual leave/foster carers on holiday
- The 4 weekly visit was a local standard – the national standard was 6 weeks
- Quality of the visits were monitored
- Vast majority of the children placed outside the Borough were within a 20 miles radius of Rotherham

Resolved:- That the contents of the report and accompanying dataset (Appendix A) be received and noted.

33. LAC EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES/VIRTUAL HEAD TEACHER

Peter McNamara, Virtual School, presented the 2017 report.

The purpose of the Rotherham Virtual School for Looked After Children was to raise educational achievement, promote emotional wellbeing and improve the life chances of children and young people in care and care leavers.

The report highlighted:-

- Two Educational Psychologists to support its work in promoting Attachment Friendly and Emotionally Aware Schools
- The number of Looked After Children had increased from 405 in March 2015 to 430 in March 2016 and 484 in March 2017
- In order to cope with the additional demand for services and the increased complexity of cases the Virtual School had recruited an additional primary and an additional secondary advocate

Key Achievements during the past 12 months included:-

- Significant increase in take-up of Early Education Places

- 67% of Foundation Stage children reached a Good level of development
- Year 1 Phonics – 60% passed the test
- Key Stage 2 – average progress scores in 2016 significantly above national and regional comparators
- Key Stage 2 – improved outcomes in 2017
- GCSE – Progress 8 scores in 2016 were above national and regional comparators and Attainment 8 scores were broadly in line with national and regional comparators
- GCSE – in 2017 45% of those who attended mainstream schools achieved a minimum of 4 A*-C
- GCSE – in 2017 3 young people achieved 9 A*-C including English and Maths, 1 achieved 8 A*-C including English and 2 achieved 5A*-C including English
- Education, Employment and Training 2016 – Rotherham's performance compared favourably with national and regional comparators with 2-3 care leavers aged 17 and 18 in education, employment or training
- PEP Compliance and PEP Quality – further improvements in both the quality and completion rate of PEPs. In July 2017 the completion rate was 97.2% with 86% judged (externally) to be good or better
- Ofsted School Ratings – the high level of LAC attending good or outstanding schools had been maintained
- Attendance – overall attendance, over time, remained high between 94% and 96% for all school-aged pupils

At the last inspection the key judgement grade for 'the experience and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence' was 'inadequate' The current Position Statement which examined progress since the last inspection on the full range of detailed and specific judgements contained in the report would suggest an overall current judgement of 'good'.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Linkages with the Therapeutic Team
- Intensive Prevention Programme pilot identifying those young people felt at risk of placement disruption
- Attachment Friendly Schools Project - the next cohort of school teachers would commence in January 2018
- Recent Pride of Rotherham event attended by more than 100 young people
- ELSA Programme
- Children's Commissioner – Children's Mental Healthcare in England October 2017 – Rotherham was detailed in terms of its health provision indicating 70% partial compliance
- The need to ensure that those children with Statements of Special Educational Needs were converged to Education Health and Care Plans

- The role of foster carers when a young person has communication problems and having appointments with Speech Therapists within school
- Correlation between fixed-term/permanent exclusions and SEN specialist provision

Resolved:- (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a report be submitted to the next meeting on those young people who scored more than 17 on the SDQ and receiving input from CAHMS.

(3) That the recent publication - Children's Commissioner – Children's Mental Healthcare in England October 2017 – be circulated to Panel members.

(4) That an update be submitted on the numbers of SEND convergence to EHCP.

34. 'MOCKINGBIRD'

Ian Walker, Head of Service, reported on the above project, 'Mockingbird', which was to be launched shortly.

The principle was to have a hub and spoke model whereby 1 set of foster carers would not have any full-time placements but would become a support family for 6-7 satellite foster carers. The support would include regular social events, telephone calls and planned respite which would be branded as "family time". The satellite families would be able to pre-book family time/sleep over time.

The aim was for the constellation to become more self-sufficient and provide greater stability for each Looked After Child with the whole family became the carer for the young person rather than the 1 foster family.

There was a target of 6 months to have the project up and running (April/May, 2018).

Councillor Cusworth was involved with the project.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

35. RELAUNCH OF THE LAC COUNCIL CAMPAIGN - "THIS IS NOT A SUITCASE"

This was covered under Minute No. 31.

36. SPECIAL LEAVE PROVISION FOR FOSTER CARERS/ADOPTERS

Ian Walker, Head of Service, presented a report proposing enhancement of the Council's leave provisions for employees who were Rotherham

prospective/foster carers and prospector adopters and also to support Rotherham foster carers already providing this type of care by providing time off where necessary.

At present, although there was a number of supportive measures available to Council employees requiring flexible working, there was currently no specific paid provision which enabled carers to have time off to attend fostering or adoption events such as training, reviews or panel.

The Service viewed the 'foster friendly employer' initiative evidence of best practice and a means to encourage more Council employees to become foster carers for Rotherham. The Service would promote the support available to enable more employees to take on this role.

It was proposed that time off work may be granted under the umbrella of 'special leave' for prospective Rotherham foster carers/adopters undergoing assessment; for adopters during the transition of a child into adoption and for foster carers post approval. This category of leave must not be used where other forms of leave such as annual and/or flexi leave were more appropriate to the circumstances such as a family holiday. Those who had completed the initial enquiry stage of the adoption/foster process and wished to proceed to assessment to have the ability to apply for up to 5 days paid leave and 5 days unpaid leave specifically for pre-adoption/pre-fostering approval activities per year.

The 5 days could be taken in a rolling 12 months period. Owing to the separate leave arrangements and term time only working applied in schools, the entitlement related to non-schools employees only and was pro rata for part-time employees. The entitlement of 5 days paid leave and 5 days unpaid leave would be per adoptive/fostering household and not per child.

Resolved:- That the initiative be supported.

37. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That under Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 (information relates to finance and business affairs).

38. FOSTERING CARER RECRUITMENT

In order to meet the demands of identifying new foster carers for vulnerable children, the Council needed to continue to invest in recruiting suitable foster carers to ensure that wherever possible Rotherham Children in Care received family based care within the community in

which they knew and lived. With an increase in demand it was essential that the Council took an innovative approach to the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

Resolved:- (1) That the introduction of a Refer a Foster Carers Scheme available for staff and foster carers to recommend possible suitable carers be supported.

(2) That the costs associated with the scheme be offset against the Fostering budget.

39. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: -

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Tuesday, 19th December, 2017, commencing at 5.00 p.m.