

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday, 18th December, 2018

Present:- Councillor Jarvis (in the Chair) and Councillor M. Elliott.

Also present were Tracey Arnold, Peter Douglas, Catherine Hall, Dr. Hashmi, Tina Hohn, Mary Jarrett, Ian Walker, Rebecca Wall and Cathryn Woodward.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cusworth, J. Elliot and Watson.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

37. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL UPDATE

The Panel noted the LACC December 2018 update report which highlighted:-

Muslim Foster Carer Project

- Kiran's experiences and suggestions to improve the Service for Muslim children and young people were being considered at the newly formed Muslim Foster Carer Project who were building their action plan around her suggestions
- This was a very exciting project for the LAC Council who felt very positive about co-producing improvements with Social Care

Pride of Rotherham Awards 2018

- Held at the New York Stadium to celebrate the success of Rotherham's Looked After and Leaving Care Young People
- 210 children and young people were individually nominated by teachers, Social Workers, support staff etc. for something they had done that warranted special recognition over the previous year
- All LAC Council and Lil LAC Club members were nominated for the community award for their contributions to the LACC and Lil LACC

Young Volunteer of the Year 2018

- Kiran scooped the Award at the Community Achievement Awards in November

Remembrance Sunday 2018

- 12 members of the LACC joined the Mayor and Chief Executive for the Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service at the Minster
- Brogan had been voted by his peers to lay a poppy wreath of remembrance and gratitude on behalf of the group

Fundraising

- The LACC had actively pursued funding to support activities and session refreshments throughout the year
- The group had successfully secured funding through the Community Leadership Fund and CIDON construction who had paid for group activities, day trips and almost 100 suitcases for LAC when they moved placement
- They were now exploring their ability to raise funds through using their unique position and expertise of being a LAC within the care system by engaging in consultations and delivering training to foster carers and Social Workers which would improve practice with Looked After and Leaving Care young people
- Engagement in a number of workshops to give their voices to issues arising from NHS LAC Health Assessments to support improvements in the Service

Lil LAC Club Activities

- Active recruitment of new members
- The children had been engaging in create seasonal crafts, making cards and homemade gifts for people they cared about

Resolved:- That the December update be noted.

38. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16TH OCTOBER, 2018

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th October, 2018.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th October, 2018, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

39. LIBERTY HOUSE - UPDATE

Mary Jarrett, Service Manager, Children with Disabilities Team and EHC Assessment Team, submitted an update on Liberty House, Rotherham's only registered children's home.

Liberty House offered provision for 4 children to receive respite care per night with a higher number of young people on a Wednesday night where a group of high functioning young people attended who required a lesser amount of direct support. It also offered full-time residential care for a child/young person who required an emergency placement.

Ofsted inspected the facility annually. It had received Outstanding outcomes from the last 2 full inspections, November 2016 and December 2017. However, since compiling the report, Ofsted had visited and Liberty House was now "Good"; one of the biggest impacts on the rating was the impact of the use of the emergency bed.

Actions arising from the Ofsted inspection were to review the rota and

make Liberty House more robust when the emergency bed was in use and the administration processes. Plans had recently been approved to allow Liberty House to utilise Liquid Logic enabling all children's records to be held in one place and the ability to access both by residential care staff and Social Workers.

The emergency bed had been in use for one young person who required highly specialised provision from March to May 2018 and had resulted in almost all respite care during that period having to be cancelled due to his needs requiring 3 members of staff. Since May no respite had been cancelled.

The Registered Manager and Responsible Individual had undertaken to increase the permanent staffing of the Home increasing it by 2 care staff and one senior member of staff as well as reviewing the rota arrangements to ensure consistent staffing across the week and pro rata allocation of weekend annual leave.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

40. IRO ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Tracey Arnold, Service Manager IRO, presented the 2018 IRO Annual Report which 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).

The key issues were:-

- The Service was developing a more sophisticated suite of data to ensure that it had a footprint in children's lives which were linked to better outcomes
- Children and young people chairing of co-participating in their own reviews was a fundamental development within the Service helping shift the focus from the review being seen as an administrative task to that of a restorative conversation with the young person about their plans
- Review of the escalation and challenge process
- It was important that the introduction of link teams, having a voice at the AP forum, attendance at residential panel, PLOP and MST FIT, was embedded and the knowledge that came from the IRO Service about the health of the organisation was developed in a thread that ran from senior managers to Social Workers

Discussion ensued on the report with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- IRO Service should be seen as a critical friend to the organisation
- Work was taking place with the Performance Team for the Service to have its own performance data

- Liquid Logic would assist with performance data and the escalation/challenge process
- Pilot taking place in some IROs of children co-participating in their own reviews
- Link Team agenda - each IRO now had a LAC/Locality Service area
- Desire for increased connection with senior managers and carry out impact analysis of the IRO role, what impact/difference it made
- Health Service would welcome the challenge of critical friend
- Permanent recruitment was underway

Resolved:- (1) That the IRO 2018 annual report be noted.

(2) That Tina Arnold and Catherine Hall meet to discuss the involvement of IRO in its role as critical friend.

41. RIGHTS TO RIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Tracey Arnold, Service Manager IRO and Advocacy Services, presented the Rights to Rights 2018 annual report.

The report reflected the progress and contribution the R2R Service had made to the outcomes for Looked after Children in Rotherham through the provision of the advocacy service and Independent Visitors (IVs) scheme.

The main area for development for the Service were:-

- Balancing the visibility of the advocates alongside offering the young person confidentiality
- Evidence outcomes for the children due to the Service's involvement
- A more sophisticated suite of data required in order to track the outcomes of the Service's involvement and answer "what difference do we make to those young people we are involved with"
- Embed the profile of the Service within the organisation beyond the Looked after Children Service
- Address the Advocacy Services and IV involvement with those of the Looked after Children who were not White British in culture and ethnicity
- Links with the Children's Disability Services
- Introduction of an escalation process similar to that of the IRO to ensure minimal delay

Tina Hohn reported on work taking place on ethnic backgrounds and invited Tracey to be involved.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

42. VIRTUAL SCHOOL

In accordance with Minute No. 33 of the meeting held on 16th October,

2019, Peter Douglas and Tina Horn, Virtual School, presented the Virtual School 2018-19 priorities which were:-

Attainment and progress
Health and wellbeing
Stability in education
Developing leaders

Also included was an update on GCSE progress.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- With regard to Personal Education Plans (PEPs), particularly at secondary school level, it was important to get the Head Teacher involved and then there could be more challenge about the detail that came back to the Virtual School. Also it had been piloted that advisors go out and provide support work in a school/shadowed a couple of young people or be an extra person in the room and for them to witness what happened in the classroom and provide feedback
- Consideration would also be given to piloting “champions” in schools who would be responsible for raising the issue in staff meetings
- It was hoped to extend performance plans to include completion of PEPs and LAC young people who had been permanently or fixed term excluded from schools, children out of education and those not receiving the 25 statutory entitlement to address deficiencies in education provision
- GCSE – work was taking place on improving the quality of data analysis throughout the year. There would be a much improved quality reporting of progress and likely outcomes and provide the ability to look at the different ages where making progress and where the concerns were
- Since the start of the Virtual School in 2015 the children then in primary education were now in secondary education and an improvement in those children could be seen
- Children from the age of 2 had a PEP and a massive impact on their readiness for school and learning had been seen. Consideration was now being given to pre-planning before the age of 2 and matching so they were ready for education

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

(2) That an update be submitted in late summer 2019 on the progress with Personal Education Plans.

43. PERFORMANCE MONITORING OCTOBER 2018

Consideration was given to the report presented by Cathryn Woodward, Performance and Data Officer Social Care, provided a summary of performance for key performance indicators across Looked After Children Services for October, 2018. 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 stated that performance within the LAC teams had remained reasonably consistent despite the significantly increasing caseloads. Where performance had dipped (Health Needs Assessments, dental checks, up-to-date care plans and statutory visits) it was commonly due to delays in inputting rather than the work not being completed. The 4 issues would be the main focus of attention in the remaining performance clinics of 2018. The report also drew attention to:-

- A continued increase in the Looked After Children profile. At the end of March 2018 there had been 627 children which had increased to 658 as at the end of October, a rate of 116 per 10,000 population. This was significantly high when compared to the statistical neighbour average of 81.3
- There had been 26 admissions to care with the average age being 6.4 years
- 22 children had left care giving a net increase of 4 LAC. Over the course of 2018 the monthly net increase had started to slow down although the desired monthly net reduction as yet to be achieved on a consistent basis
- 51% of children were subject to full Care Orders, 32% on an Interim Care Order, 11% on Placement Orders with Care Order and 5% under Section 20
- Decrease in the proportion of LAC who had up-to-date Care Plans. Compliance at the end of March was 89% and slowed increased through the year to 91.7% in September. This had decreased to 87.6% in October
- The timeliness of statutory reviews had improved from 81.3% in August to 89.9% in October (133 out of 148)
- Statutory visits performance had reduced to 95%
- The proportion of children placed in a family based setting remained stable at 82.7%

- Reduction in the number of LAC experiencing multiple placement moves in the last 12 months -14.8% at the end of May to 12.1% at the end of October
- Initial Health Assessments current year to date figure was 43.9%, below last year's performance of 55%. A joint process review had been held to discuss improving engagement and timeliness
- Health Reviews performance had decreased from 86.6% in September to 83.7%
- Dental performance had decreased from 76% in August to 67.2%
- 97.4% of eligible LAC had a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in the summer term. As of the end of October 92.2% eligible LAC population had a PEP
- The number of young people receiving a Care Leavers service at the end of October was 242, a reduction on the 2017/18 year end position of 256
- 95.5% of care leavers in suitable accommodation
- The number of care leavers who were in Education, Employment or Training had slightly improved to 63.6% which placed Rotherham in the top quartile
- 10 new foster carers and 11 ongoing assessments
- 20 fostering Expressions of Interest made over the course of October
- During 2018/19 there had been 15 resignation/de-registration of foster carers
- 14 children had been adopted in 2018/19. At the end of October there were 25 children in adoptive placements of which 11 had court dates for their adoption hearings
- 21 children had been matched with adoptive parents but yet to be placed and family finding continued for a further 19 children
- 13 sets of adoptive parents had been fully approved so far this year with 7 more at stage 1 and 6 at stage 2
- Average caseloads for LAC teams 1-3 were at a high of 14.6 and the average caseload for LAC teams 4-5 was 13.8

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/highlighted:-

- Despite reasonably strong foster carer recruitment, it had been offset by the number of resignation/deregistrations
- Foster Carer Recruitment Marketing Strategy had been re-written and still required further work before its relaunch

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

44. PEER REVIEW

Ian Walker, Head of Look After Children Service, presented the feedback from the recent Peer Review undertaken by Lincolnshire County Council:-

Areas of Focus

- Quality of Care Plan and Pathway Plans
- IRO's – challenge and monitoring of quality
- Fostering recruitment – review of the process at the front end e.g. marketing, expressions of interest
- Admissions to Care – review of cases
- Right Child Right Care Programme – review to ensure performance Voice of the Child
- Interface/Transition LAC – Leaving Care/Adults

Workforce – Strengths

- Children's Services demonstrate a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children. There had been clear improvement within the LAC Service since Lincolnshire's visit in 2017
- There was a strong cultural shift across the organisation which was clearly evident when meeting all staff
- Workforce stability in LAC/IRO/LC teams was good and the workforce were motivated and keen to provide a good service to Looked After Children in Rotherham
- All Social Workers reported access to frequent verbal case discussions with their managers including senior leaders. Senior leaders visible, accessible, staff able to raise concerns/suggestions and felt listened to
- Continued reduction in agency staff with agency staff becoming permanent employees
- All staff knew their children well and had high aspirations and hopes for their futures
- Co-location seen as a major success, LAC felt integrated into the wider CYPS
- Therapeutic support particularly Intensive Intervention Programme (IIP) was seen as highly successful

LAC – Strengths

- LAC and Leaving Care met regularly to improve integrated working
- Joint supervisions between teams at transfer
- Edge of Care Team very well regarded and seen as effective

- Some positive views with regard to PLO Panel. Staff could see more recent challenge of thresholds, pre-proceedings, to divert families away from proceedings or from children becoming LAC
- Leaving Care and LAC were proactively working with parents and their networks to support young people with maintain or re-building relationships
- Improved accommodation for 16/18 year olds
- Missing episodes for 16/17 year olds had reduced by 60%. Leaving Care were identifying risk, undertaking intense direct work, they knew and care for their children and would go the extra mile to ensure their safety
- Majority of case records viewed were up-to-date. Children seen and statutory visits in most cases within timescale

IRO – Strengths

- Dispute resolution process was making a difference
- Major drive on performance within the IRO Service including a data suite and monthly performance meetings. IROs striving to evidence their footprint and impact on the child's plan

Foster Carer Recruitment strengths

- The staff were enthusiastic and motivated to provide a good service
- There was a stable management group
- There was a specialist team that worked with Reg24 carers, private fostering short breaks and Mocking Bird. Team managers had been proactive in ensuring the child's voice was included within fostering network evaluation of hub and had been creative in how they achieved this with a video
- Workers felt supported by the management team in developing the service
- There was a dedicated marketing worker based within the Fostering Team working jointly with the Communications Team
- A PSW had recently been appointed to the team which they were finding invaluable with supporting new carers
- Managers felt that most of the Reg24 placements progressed to SGO's and those that did not, did not do so, as this was the right plan for the child
- The foundations with regards to marketing were strong with a communication and marketing campaign plan for the year. The Challenge 63, Muslim foster carer project and start parties appeared to have worked well and had resulted in formal applications being received
- The managers and foster carers were positive about the retention project in place with fostering network
- There was a dedicated recruitment team. Drop-in sessions were regular and facilitated by workers and foster carers
- The skills to foster course was bi-monthly, there was flexibility with facilitating the course to avoid drift and delay in assessments. The

- introduction of Mocking Bird had commenced and was now in the process of setting up the second hub with a third identified
- There was a dedicated fostering advisor offering consistency to all new applicants
 - The introduction of the pipeline was proving effective with clear monitoring and tracking of all enquiries including long term enquiries resulting in 3 that had progressed to assessment
 - There was a positive working relationship between the fostering advisor and the assessing social workers, this had supported the development of the initial visit process, ensuring initial visits were robust. This had also included joint visits with assessing social workers
 - There was a clear sense of a developed fostering community with the foster carers
 - The introduction of the Mocking Bird had been welcomed by foster carers who saw this a valuable source of support
 - The Mocking Bird carers felt that the multi-agency training was a real positive and should be extended to all foster carers
 - Foster carers felt that the support that they received from this SSW when in work was excellent, however, commented that there had been significant periods of instability within the service

Workforce – Areas for Future Focus

- Attention to compliance had been robust, however, staff and managers suggested the need to move the focus to outcomes whilst not diluting compliance
- A review of transfer points was welcomed by staff, there were still too many transfer points, changes of social workers which was not in line with your relationships-based practice framework and restorative practice

LAC – Areas for Future Focus

- Review of transfer point to LAC was welcomed by staff – CYP still had too many handover points
- There was not always adherence to the PLO process and Care planning process where permanence other than adoption was the plan
- Not effectively using the pre-proceedings process for unborn babies. There was no consistently used pre-birth assessment template
- Family finding was not as rigorous as we would expect to see – there was a concern about the robustness of the viability assessments. Need to encourage staff to develop a more systematic approach to exploring networks and family members, both as potential carers but also as key support in safety planning
- Some misunderstanding and lack of knowledge regarding Reg24/SGO's placements. Over reliance upon the 2 specialist fostering workers
- An improving focus on robust permanence planning would assist with exit planning being in the mind from the outset

- In some case planning and decision making about achieving permanence suggested drift and a lack of clarity
- Review planning pathways and streamline panels
- LAC staff reported that OOB placements, Court work and processes were impacting upon their ability to progress permanence plans and undertake life story work
- Single assessments were not always updated to assist planning or following significant events

Right Child Right Care Programme

- Growing numbers of LAC presented significant risk to LAC Services' budget and consequently the Borough's budget as a whole
- Rotherham had undertaken a 'Deep Dive' of the current and recent LAC cohort to ensure children were transitioning to LAC status within appropriate thresholds to secure permanence via a number of routes and to develop exit plans
- The RCRCP was yielding results, however, in some cases where permanence or revocations of orders had been agreed, there was drift and delay. Staff cited the delays as insufficient Panel availability, court time and capacity due to court work demands. Furthermore LAC staff questioned thresholds within the duty teams and identified cases where they had been able to return a child home in a short space of time

IRO – Areas for Future Focus

- IRO compliance form – focussed on paperwork rather than outcomes. Social Workers spoke negatively of report and questioned IRO's ability and confidence to navigate the case record system. This form could be developed to be more restorative and include impact and outcomes for the child
- Managers to ensure robust follow-up to escalations from the IRO Service

Care Plans – Areas for Future Focus

- Quality of Care Plans/Pathway Plans reviewed was inconsistent. However, one Plan sampled was deemed an excellent example and could be used as best practice example
- Several of the Care Plans/Pathway Plans reviewed lacked analysis, defined actions and how progress would be measured
- Child's voice was not consistently apparent in Care Plans
- Social Workers felt the current care planning form was too process-led and not child or family friendly
- Focus on consistency now in respect of children's Care Plans and ensure that they were analytical, SMART and clearly articulated the child's lived experience
- Staff knew their children well. They would encourage an increased use of direct work (words and pictures etc.) with children and that this was clearly evidence on the case records. This would increase the quality of care planning

- A real opportunity with a clear practice framework, SOS and Restorative Practice, to place relationships at the heart of everything. To ensure that this was embedded within CYPS and across partner agencies, this needed to become a shared language and be driven by senior leaders across the organisation. A review of the implementation plan and re-launch of the vision may be necessary

Foster Carer Recruitment

Areas for Future Focus

- With the growth of LAC numbers in Rotherham, it was vital for the financial sustainability of the LAC Service that investment in the Fostering Service ensured sufficient inhouse placements
- The marketing campaign would benefit from being strengthened in terms of a focussed and targeted campaign. In addition to the yearly campaign, a long term strategy linked to Rotherham's Sufficiency Strategy, would provide focus and clear direction moving forward
- Strengthen the analysis of soft intelligence and data, to inform a targeted recruitment strategy. Recruitment needs to reflect the demographics of the current and future Looked After population and increase the growth of inhouse foster placements
- Link recruitment campaigns to an umbrella slogan to gain brand recognition
- The front door appears vulnerable with only one worker who was to go on maternity leave. The Service would benefit from being strengthened in terms of staffing capacity. The Fostering Advisor role worked well and was valued by the teams; if capacity was increased this would support growth within the Service. The Fostering Advisor appeared to manage all initial expressions of interest, enquiries and visits and holds until stage 1. Additional capacity would allow for reflection and would also ensure timely and quality responses to enquiries. This was a significant part of the process as recruitment and retention of foster carers was key in delivering the Service Plan
- There was a retention project being undertaken with the fostering network; the offer to foster carers needed to be more explicit and used as part of the marketing campaign
- Foster carers felt that they were not seen as professionals or valued and commented that they would like the opportunity for their voice to be heard. One comment "please treat me like a professional and be open and honest". Foster carers were keen to be part of the fostering journey moving to a "done with" culture. As part of a longer term strategy annual surveys and focus groups with existing foster carers would support and inform retention
- Drop-in sessions were in place, however, consideration as to the facilitation of these events needed to consider all targeted areas including events as currently they were excluding a proportion of the market i.e. applicants who worked. A reduction in the frequency from monthly to bi-monthly with a consistent targeted message may wanted to be considered
- Foster carers felt that joint training with Social Workers would provide

them with a more holistic picture and would make them feel more valued

- Foster carers understood the necessity to recruit new carers, however, they did not feel they were part of the journey or as involved as they could be
- Although the managers and the foster carers felt that the IPP was a good resource, there was a significant waiting list
- Foster carers felt that the investment in the Service had reduced in terms of staffing and “cover” for maternity and sickness with a number of part-time staff, leaving foster carers, feeling unsupported and not valued

It was clarified that there was a turnover of staff due to a number of Social Workers having gone on maternity leave/term sickness but there were some backfill arrangements in place. Approval had been given to a virtual assessment team consisting of a number of social workers, not employed by the Council, but qualified to undertake foster carer assessments. They would be picking up the assessments as from January 2019

Resolved:- That the information be noted.

45. DIRECTORATE INVITES FOR 2019

It was proposed that, once the dates of the Panel meetings for 2019/20 were known, a calendar of invites be issued to the Strategic Directors to present their Looked After Children Promise. Consideration would be given to the questions relevant to the invited Directorate at the meeting prior to their scheduled attendance.

Resolved:- That a schedule of Directorate invites for 2019/20 be drawn up and invitations issued to the Strategic Directors to present their Looked After Children Promise to the Panel.

46. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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).

47. CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION

Ian Walker, Head of Looked After Children Service, gave a brief presentation to the Panel on Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) the definition of which was “occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal

activity. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology”.

The presentation highlighted:-

- County Lines – what are they?
- The County Line Model
- Human Trafficking
- CCE – heightened vulnerability
- Warning signs
- Barriers to engagement
- Practical tips
- Agree an action plan
- National Referral Mechanism

Discussion ensued on the presentation with the following issues raised:-

- Vulnerabilities
- Work as single agency initially, then with the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board and then regional work
- Screening process
- Possible future focus of inspections
- Need to develop strong process to support young people out of the situation
- Ongoing work with schools to raise awareness, increasing their knowledge and encouraging referrals

Resolved:- (1) That arrangements be made for an All Member Seminar.

(2) That regular updates be submitted to the Panel.

48. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Tuesday, 12th February, 2019, commencing at 5.00 p.m.