

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday, 9th April, 2019

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

Also present were:- Tracey Arnold, David Bailey, Lynda Briggs, Peter Douglas, Luke Fox, Jodie Glover, Catherine Hall, Tina Hohn, Christian Palfrey, Sharon Sandall, Jon Stonehouse, Ian Walker and Cathryn Woodward.

Members of the Looked After Children Council present were Adorabella, Angelina, Brogan, Jordan, Kaylen, and Zuzanna supported by Lisa Duvalle.

Apologies for absence were received from Alisa Barr and Mary Jarrett.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

59. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 5TH FEBRUARY 2019

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5th February, 2019.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5th February, 2019, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

It was noted that The Muslim Foster Care Project (Minute No. 52) was now known as the "Diversity Scheme for Foster Parents". 85-90 members of the local muslim community had been in attendance at the recent launch event to receive information presented by the Fostering Service and Mercy Mission resulting in approximately 24 expressions of interest. They had since been contacted by Mercy Mission resulting in 9 potential viable foster carers.

Those that were not ready to become foster carers at the present time had been encouraged to become host families for celebrations such as Eid and independent visitors.

60. FOSTERING RECRUITMENT/YOUNG INSPECTORS REPORT

Ian Walker, Head of Service, presented the Young Inspectors report on fostering recruitment as a result of feedback received from foster carers.

Foster carers had reported that, when making an initial enquiry to the Rotherham Fostering Recruitment Team, they had been given the hard facts and was painted a too negative picture thus putting people off.

As a result of the feedback, work had taken place with Ashlea Harvey, Young Inspector Co-ordinator, and 5 Young Inspectors who undertook an inspection via the website and a telephone mystery shopping exercise.

It had resulted in some learning for the Recruitment Duty Team in respect of engaging people in the process first before working through the risks and potential pitfalls. It was known that the use of social media and website accessibility was poor and needed to be reviewed; this would form part of the refreshed Marketing Strategy.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- The action log had not been fully populated as yet due to the lack of capacity but would feed into the Marketing Strategy
- The Young Inspectors had conducted their own analysis; it would be used to develop the action plan
- The Young Inspectors would hold the Service to account if actions were not implemented
- Feedback had been provided to staff/during their individual training sessions

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

(2) That when completed, the action plan be submitted to the Panel.

61. REVISED FOSTER CARER FEES AND ALLOWANCES

Ian Walker, Head of Service, presented a report setting out the revised foster carer fees and allowances which had not been revised since 2016.

The lack of sufficient foster placements meant that Rotherham relied upon the use of independent fostering agencies or residential provision which had led to significant pressure on the external placement budget. In-house placements were more likely to maintain placement stability as the Social Work support was more readily accessible and maintain links for the child with family and community.

Consultation had taken place with the Foster Carer Forum on the elements of the current fees and allowances. Whilst financial incentives were a consideration, foster carers had said that they regarded the level of support received from their Fostering Social Worker as critical to their fostering experience.

The outcome of the consultation and review was that the proposed 'offer' incorporated financial incentive and ongoing good quality support, training and development for Rotherham's foster carers.

The report had been considered by the Children and Young People's Services Directorate Leadership Team and agreed the implementation and changes to foster carer fees and allowances as follows:-

- An additional skill level fee to be paid to the carer when caring for more than one child
- The weekly allowance, to cover the expense involved in caring for a child, to remain the same (slightly above national minimum average recommended)
- Changes to payments to foster carers for birthdays, Christmas/cultural celebrations and holiday pay for the child in placement

Councillor Jarvis reported that she had recently visited the City of Lincoln Council which had a very good recruitment rate of foster carers. Their marketing was very impressive and had a dedicated person who understood care and fostering.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- The Commissioning Team were in the process of revising the Sufficiency Plan and completely revamping the Marketing Strategy
- There was now dedicated time within the Marketing Team
- There was to be an increased focus on social media and internet accessibility
- Presently the marketing and initial contact was done through the Social Workers. Work was to be carried out with social enterprise for the first 2 parts of the process and only when a “hot lead” would it be passed to a Social Worker
- A number of enquiries were being received from IFA organisations primarily because of the level of support offered to the Authority’s children in their care
- The fees were a factor but not the only factor; it was the support provided
- The Social Workers would have to be more challenging in respect of their foster carers and ensuring they engaged/continued with their training and if not, submitted to the Fostering Panel for review of the skill payment
- In order for foster carers to increase their skill range they would have to increase the age range of Looked After Children
- A dip sample would be carried out to ensure foster carers were receiving the appropriate skill payment for their foster children
- Was there a Local Offer for those foster carers who might want to change?
- Level 4 foster carers were those who took older teenagers/the more challenging placements. There would be an expectation that those foster carers/at least one of them would be available in the foster home 24/7
- Were emergency foster carers paid on a retainer or would they be paid scale 4?

It was noted that the report would be considered by Cabinet in June.

Resolved:- (1) That the revised foster carer fees and allowances be noted.

(2) That information on the Local Offer be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel.

(3) That the query with regard to the rate of pay for emergency foster carers be clarified and fed back to Councillor Cusworth.

62. NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ADVISER FOR CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report by the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, Mark Riddell, who was appointed to work with all local authorities helping them to implement the new care leaver provisions introduced through the Children and Social Work Act.

The chapters in the report included:-

- Better prepared and supported to live independently
- Improved access to education, training and employment
- Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure
- Improved access to health support
- Achieving financial stability
- Aims and Ambitions for 2019-20

The report celebrated his findings of what was working well and identified good practice relating to provision for care leavers that all local authorities would find useful. The report also identified key challenges that local authorities would need to address in order to provide consistently high quality services for care leavers that fully reflected the corporate parenting principles they should be embedding across services for care leavers.

Rotherham had been included in Mr. Riddell's visits to local authorities. He would be invited again at the end of the summer/beginning of the autumn to ascertain his opinion on whether Rotherham had progressed and offer any challenges going forward.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- There was now dedicated EET support from the Early Help Services and would be part of the panel and find work experience opportunities for the young people
- Every young person would have their own bank account before they left care and training was to be delivered to foster carers regarding helping the young people with budgeting
- All the young people would be in some level of poverty when looking at the affordability of housing and where their money would be spent; it was increasingly challenging to find accommodation that was affordable. It was very difficult to manage on £57.90 when

considering rent, food, utility bills etc. The Service would support and help where it could

- There were also difficulties on where the young person was on their benefit journey and sometimes the delay in Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

It was noted that the Improving Lives Select Commission was to conduct a piece of work on Universal Credit. It would be ensured that the issue of care leavers was fed into the work.

Peter Douglas reported that at the Virtual Heads Conference, Andy Burnham (Mayor of Greater Manchester), had been very interested in care leavers' issues being fed up to City Mayors.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

63. THE HOUSE PROJECT (HP)

Consideration was given to a report on the House Project (HP), a concept developed originally by Stoke on Trent City Council in response to recognition that young people leaving the care of the local authority faced significant barriers to accessing permanent, safe, secure and suitable accommodation.

The key elements of the project were the offer of suitable, safe and long term post-care housing alongside a holistic and bespoke package of training and support that focussed upon increasing young people's independent living and personal skills and their participation in education, employment and training.

In accordance with Minute No. 154 of the Cabinet and Commissioners Decision Making Meeting on 11th June, 2018, when it was approved that the Authority become part of the next phase of DfE Innovation Funded Projects to explore the feasibility of developing an alternative housing solution for its care leavers; the Leaving Care Service had launched the HP in October 2018:-

- 10 young people had been selected for the HP; 2 placed in foster care, 5 in residential children's homes and 3 in semi-independent accommodation
- The HP worked closely with the young people's placements ensuring inclusivity for those out of authority to be part of the 6 month HP independent programme
- It had capacity to be flexible and creative with the support it could offer to help those that were out of authority return back to Rotherham
- A further 60 young people were placed in out of authority residential children's homes; the HP would aim to support 3/5 out of authority

placements each year

- The 6 month independence programme commenced in January and would run until July, 2019
- The 10 young people met weekly and saw their project facilitators once a week for one-to-one working sessions. The Service was also in the process of securing a Psychology Service to support the project
- Partnerships had been developed within the Council and had worked with Housing to secure 10 properties that would be leased to the Leaving Care Service. Once a young person was ready, and those supporting them agreed, the property would return to the Housing and Communities portfolio and the young person would become a Council tenant
- Work with the Virtual Schools for those returning from out of authority to support a smooth transition. The HP group of 10 would deliver a presentation to the designated teacher network event on 8th April, 2019, to create awareness of the project to training providers
- Attendance at the 6 weekly National House Project Young Persons Steering Group
- Feedback from the National House project was that they were pleased with the progress made and how well Rotherham knew its young people
- Participation and Young Person's Apprentice position advertised, ringfenced to care leavers
- Refurbishment work on the 10 properties would be completed by the end of the 6 month induction. The 10 young people would try their flats out for short periods of time before fully moving into them
- Work to secure the second cohort of 10 young people would commence in October 2019

The report was to be considered by the Children and Young People's Service Directorate Leadership Team and requested to approve:-

1. That the Council approve the extension of the House Project, including the extension of the 3 staff members from March 2020 to March 2022.
2. That it be acknowledged that Rotherham Care Leavers would continue to be responsible for the design, development and delivery of the project and would be supported by a range of officers from across the Council to ensure the project was delivered within the principles and practices of RMBC as well as the vision and principles

of the project.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- 6 females and 4 males made up the first cohort of 10
- The Council properties consisted of one bedroom properties – there were not many bedsits available
- Work had taken place with the young people, Social Workers and family members with regard to the areas they would like and where there was stock
- Discussions had taken place previously with regard to the ringfencing of properties to care leavers when modular housing had been considered
- Work took place with the Local Housing Officer when a property became available so they understood the project and the support they could offer as it was acknowledged that not all neighbourhoods/streets would be appropriate
- The expectation of engagement in the renovation of the property would be considered on an individual basis

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

(2) That the Assistant Director of Housing and Councillor Beck, Cabinet Member for Housing, be invited to a future Panel meeting to discuss new housing and modular housing.

(3) That where care leavers were moving into an area, they be provided with the contact details of the relevant Ward Members who they could contact for support if required.

(4) That Ward Members be informed if a care leaver was to move into their area, but not necessarily the address, so they had an awareness.

64. OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT

Consideration was given to a powerpoint presentation on the recent Ofsted focussed visit as follows:-

- What's working well
- Improving placement stability
- A 'Good' Adoption Service
- What we are doing about it
- Informal feedback – going well
- Areas for further action

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Rethink required of Challenge 63
- Elected Members could contact Foster Recruitment when there were

events in their Wards that could be used for the purposes of publicity

Resolved:- That the information be noted.

65. BIG HEARTS BIG CHANGES - MARKET MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Ian Walker, Head of Service, presented a report on a market management project, Big Hearts Big Changes, aiming to increase the range of options available to provide sufficiency of accommodation for Rotherham's Looked After Children.

The current Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy had not produced a net gain in foster carers as the pace of de-registrations had outstripped the approval of new carers. Although a new Strategy had been prepared, it was acknowledged that current and planned activity may not provide the pace and volume of recruitment required. The Market Management Project Group had explored a number of options that had the potential to significantly accelerate progress towards increasing the number of Rotherham foster carers.

The Children and Young People's Services Directorate Leadership Team were to consider a number of proposals which were set out in the report submitted.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

66. CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE - FEBRUARY 2019

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 February, 2019. 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 stated that in February there had been the first increase in the month end number of LAC since October. The post-Christmas period often saw a spike in referrals resulting in CiN, CP and an eventual rise in LAC numbers together with children being less likely to be adopted or achieve permanent over the Christmas period.

The second phase of the Right Child Right Care project had begun in January 2019 where 228 children had been identified as potential candidates for discharges from care in 2019. 48 of those would turn 18 and the remaining 180 fell under the identified categories of Adoption, Aged 14-16 years, Long Term Matched, placed with Family and Friends or in placement for more than 18 months. Other children at baseline fell under the categories but, when assessed, not deemed appropriate for

them at the current time. 10 children had also been identified for participation in the Lifelong Links programme with the aim of improving outcomes for those children who did not have a plan to live with their family or secure permanence through adoption by helping them to make lifelong links with people who were important to them.

The report also drew attention to:-

- 26 children admitted to care and only 6 ceased to be Looked After giving a total of 645 LAC at the end of the month. The rate of LAC per 10,000 population was 113.3% from a high of 114.8% in August. However, Rotherham was still exceptionally high in comparison to statistical neighbours
- The percentage of children who ceased to be Looked After due to permanence remained at 29% for the financial year an increase on the previous 2 years of 27.9% (2016/17) and 27.3% (2017/18)
- The percentage distribution by legal status remained consistent with 52% of children subject to full Care Orders, 30% on an Interim Care Order, 11% on Placement Orders with Care Order and 5% under Section 20
- The proportion of LAC with an up-to-date care plan was 87% compared with 89.5% at the same point in 2017/18 with a slightly lower number of LAC (628) Care Plans would be the area of focussed activity for March in order to further improve performance
- 93.9% Statutory Reviews within timescale
- 97.4% statutory visits
- 62.5% of LAC of LAC were in long term stable placements
- 13.4% of the LAC had experienced 3 or more placement moves in the last 12 months. This was a slight improvement since the start of the year (14.4%) but a slight performance decrease since the summer (12.1%)
- 82.9% of LAC placed in family based settings including internal fostering, independent fostering, pre-adoption placements and those placed with parent/family/friends
- All Initial Health Assessments undertaken during February were completed in time
- 84.3% of LAC had an up-to-date assessment as at the end of February. This was a decline in performance compared to previous months but slightly higher than the 2017/18 year end figure of 83.7%

- Dental assessment had been a key focus in performance activity and had seen 91.9% of LAC with an up-to-date Dental Assessment
- 97% of LAC had a PEP meeting during the 2018-19 Autumn term
- At the end of February, 94.6% eligible LAC population had a PEP
- There had been a realignment of the performance reporting for the Care Leavers cohort to reflect the requirements of legislation. Performance would now be reported on the wider cohort of young people identified as care leavers. This gave a cohort of 300 care leavers at the end of February, a significant increase from 239 at the end of November
- 83.9% of Care Leavers had a Pathway Plan with 82.9% having an up-to-date Plan. The cases without a Pathway Plan tended to be young people aged 16 the majority of which would have an in-date care plan and would be addressed by transitioning young people to a Pathway Plan on Liquid Logic
- 97.3% of care leavers living in suitable accommodation
- The number of care leavers who were in Education, Employment or Training had slightly improved to 65% and placed Rotherham in the top quartile
- 67.6% of LAC were in foster placements
- 148 inhouse fostering households. However, despite approving a new household in February, there had been 2 de-registrations in January and one in February
- 10 new foster families approved with a further 13 assessments ongoing
- 31 children had been adopted, an increase on the 27 achieved for the whole of 2017-18 with a third completing the process within 12 months of the children receiving their formal decision that they should be adopted
- The average for the children adopted this year had been 212.5; the national average was 220 days
- 22 families successfully approved this year, a significant increase on the 14 approved in 2017-18
- Average caseloads for LAC teams 1-3 had continued to increase throughout the year and was at a high of 19.2. Teams 4 and 5 had

increased to an average of 16.5 cases

- There had been some long term sickness which was being covered by colleagues in Team 4 for the foreseeable future

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/highlighted:-

- Evidence that a themed focus for a month had a marked impact upon performance - the focus on dental assessments during the month of February had seen a drastic improvement
- 13 Initial Health Assessments had been completed within timescale
- The Consultant Paediatrician had agreed to offer more after-school health assessments and also offer a significant number of community-based assessments
- Commitment to extend the lifework beyond those in the adoption pathway. Every Social Worker had a best practice model to work to and needed to make sure they have the capacity and skills to implement it

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

67. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN UPDATE APRIL 2019

Adorabella, Angelina, Brogan Jordan, Kaylen and Zusanne, supported by Lisa Duvalle, gave a powerpoint presentation on the work of the LAC Council which highlighted:-

- Hosted a Child Friendly Rotherham Workshop
- Total Respect Training
All the professional places for the training had been filled for April
- Sharing our Good Practice
The 'Previous Things' DVD had been shown at the Sheffield Film Festival in February
- Fundraising – Tesco Food Trolley fortnightly
- Caring Language Campaign – Challenging Care System Jargon
The LAC, together with 13 other local authorities, were conducting research around the language used within Social Care. It aimed:-
To raise awareness of Rotherham LAC Council's recommendations for changes in 'Care Language'
To change the current use of Care Language by professionals in Rotherham
To stop teachers and other professionals from exposing students' care status to peers or other parents

- Free Leisure Pass Campaign
The pass would give Looked After Children and care leavers aged 13-21/24 the opportunity to engage in free leisure activities across the Borough. A number of other authorised had agreed to this but none in South Yorkshire
- Treasurer Election
Brogan had been elected Treasurer
Adorabella had been elected Vice-Treasurer
- Lil'LAC Club Activities
Tina Hohn (Virtual School) and Sharon Kemp (Chief Executive, RMBC) had recently visited and engaged in activities

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised:-

- Public Health should be involved in the Free Leisure Pass Campaign due to the health and mental health benefits
- The young people felt that a meeting should not be called a "LAC Review" but "Paul's Review" etc.
- Lynda Briggs was to meet with the LAC Council on 1st May from a Health perspective. She would have the assessment paperwork for the young people to review the language contained within it

It was noted that the Improving Lives Select Commission was currently undertaking a review of Rothercard where the issue of free leisure passes had been raised not only for LAC but also foster carers or birth children within that family.

Representatives of the Virtual School acknowledged that it needed to address caring language and ensure that schools and professionals used the appropriate language. They would take the issue up with Head Teachers and convey the difficulties and impact of using the wrong language.

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

(2) That the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment be invited to a future Panel meeting to discuss the Free Leisure Pass Campaign.

68. DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS: -

Resolved:- That meetings take place during 2019/20 as follows:-

Tuesday, 2nd July, 2019
15th October
17th December

4th February, 2020

31st March

all commencing at 3.30 p.m.