

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday, 15th October, 2019

Present:- Councillor Watson (in the Chair); Ailsa Barr, Lynda Briggs, Peter Douglas, Lee Durrant, Catherine Hall, Tina Hohn, Ian Walker and Cathryn Woodward.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cusworth, Elliot, M. Elliott and Jarvis, Lisa Duvall, Sharon Sandall and Jon Stonehouse.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 2ND JULY 2019

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2nd July, 2019.

It was reported that the Dedicated Nursing Team had now commenced. As from September, the team of nurses were purely looking after LAC and already receiving positive feedback from foster carers.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2nd July, 2019, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

11. DEMAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Panel considered a presentation that had been made to the Big Heart Big Changes Board on 27th August, 2019 on the Demand Management Strategy.

The headlines of the presentation were:-

- The Way We Were – July 2017-18
- Achieving Cultural Change
- The number of LAC children as at January 2017-July 2019
- Projected Impact
- A Cooling System
- Right Child Right Care
- 2018-19 Q3 Regional Profile Trends
- Out of Authority Step Down Plans
- Placement Sufficiency Strategy
- Social Care Pathway Strategy
- Next Steps

Discussion ensued with the following raised/clarified:-

- 3 key strands within the Big Heart Big Changes Strategy – Demand

- Management, Sufficiency Placement and Social Care Pathway
- Target within the Strategy to safely reduce the numbers of children in care to 600 by the end of the financial year; presently the number was 625
 - Right Child Right Care had raised interest amongst other authorities
 - Bright Sparks marketing campaign had already seen strong leads resulting in 8 enquiries and 6 initial visits. There were also numerous expressions of interest being receiving from outside of the Borough boundary
 - Foster Care Diversity Scheme community event had led to 8 foster families from the Muslim faith currently being assessed. A further community event had taken place recently which had been similarly well attended and would hopefully lead to more potential foster families
 - A local authority was considering reducing the Council Tax of a foster carer. This had not been considered in Rotherham and any possible scheme would need to involve Legal Services and Member approval

Resolved:- That the presentation be noted.

12. REVISED FOSTER CARER FEES AND ALLOWANCES

Ian Walker, Head of Service, presented a report that had been considered and approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 8th July, 2019 (Minute No. 22 refers).

The report detailed the vision in Rotherham of 'Working with Rotherham's children, young people and families to be safe, resilient and successful' and the aim to improve the care experience for children in Rotherham by ensuring that wherever possible they were looked after in a foster family environment. The Council was to revise its 'offer' to RMBC foster carers with regard to the fees and allowances that they received. If RMBC foster carer numbers were increased it would also lead to a reduced overall cost in line with budget assumptions.

The lack of sufficient RMBC foster care placements meant that Rotherham relied upon the use of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) or residential provision, both of which were significantly more costly.

Comparisons with other authorities within the Yorkshire region had also been carried out and learning from the more successful recruiters had been incorporated into this proposal e.g. Leeds incentivising carers to take additional placements. The proposals in the report would, therefore, increase the incentive for potential foster carers to become RMBC foster carers and also provide an incentive for foster carers (current and potential) to increase the number of children they fostered.

The proposal also formed part of the work to transform the Local Authority's in-house fostering agency 'offer' which included a review of Rotherham's fostering provision and the payments to foster carers. It was

anticipated that some existing Rotherham foster households may be able to increase the number of children they cared for and provide an opportunity to increase placements.

In reviewing the fee rate and structure and developing the 'offer' it was essential to ensure the fostering service remained financially competitive, whilst supporting the recruitment and retention of more locally based foster carers.

Under the new fee structure the weekly allowance and the skills payment for the first child remained the same, with an additional payment for subsequent children:-

- An additional skill level fee be paid to the carer when caring for more than one child, as set out in paragraph 2.11.
- The weekly allowance, to cover the expense involved in caring for a child, to remain the same
- Change in payments to foster carers for birthdays, Christmas/cultural celebrations and holiday pay for the child in placement, as set out in paragraph 2.11

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

13. FOSTER CARE RECRUITMENT WEBSITE

Panel members were encouraged to view the new Fostering Rotherham website (www.fosteringrotherham.com). It included:-

- 5 common myths about fostering
- 5 ways to support foster children with their education
- What is empty nest syndrome
- How will fostering affect my children
- What to expect when fostering teenagers
- What personal qualities do you need to foster

together with information on upcoming events.

Bright Sparks had a live response and knew when someone was on the website and would engage with that person via a live chat.

Currently there was an 11% success rate from an inquiry to approval which was hoped would increase.

The Authority had a formal IFA protocol. Work throughout the process had taken place with the National Association of Foster Care Providers who had been pleased that a formal offer had been drawn up. The Authority would not engage in any direct "poaching" of IFA carers, however, the carers had seen the experience/level of support/intervention on offer for the children in their care and that it was better than that on offer through IFA; a number were thinking of transferring.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

14. DRAFT STAYING PUT POLICY

Ian Walker, Head of Service, presented the above draft Policy for information.

Staying Put was about care leavers continuing to live with their foster carers when they reached the age of 18 with arrangements replicating as far as possible family life.

Foster carers were required to care for any child placed with them as if they were a member of their family; this expectation should carry through into Staying Put arrangements.

The Policy set out the:-

- Legal Framework
- Guiding Principles
- Criteria for Staying Put Arrangements
- Preparation and Expectations for a Staying Put Arrangement
- The Living Together Agreement
- Financial Arrangements
- Securing Agreement for Staying Put
- Foster Carers
- Staying Put and the Young Person
- Extending Placements
- Professional Roles and Responsibilities
- Guidance – Living Together Arrangements
- Health and Safety
- Household Insurance
- Monitoring and Reviewing Arrangements
- Safeguarding Measures
- Ending the Staying Put Arrangement
- Funding Arrangements
- Independent Fostering Agency
- Benefits for Young People
- Treatment of Benefits
- Income Tax and National Insurance for Staying Put Arrangements
Tax

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

15. ROTHERHAM ADOPTION SERVICE - ANNUAL REPORT

Ian Walker, Head of Service, presented the Rotherham Adoption Service 2018/19 annual report.

The report set out:-

- The Adoption Service
- Activity
- Timeliness of Adoption
- Family Finding
- Early Permanence Placements (Fostering to Adopt Placements)
- The Adoption Panel
- Staffing
- Adoption Support Services
- The Regional Adoption Agency
- Improvement and Development for 2019/20 onwards

An update was provided on the current situation with regard to the Regional Adoption Agency. It was hoped that a report would be submitted to the various approval processes by the end of the year.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

16. IFA CARERS TRANSFER PROTOCOL

The Panel considered a report that had been submitted to the CYPS Directorate Leadership Team regarding IFA Carers Transfer Protocol.

The proposed Protocol would recognise:-

- IFA foster carers with Rotherham children in placement need to have their allowances matched as per the Fostering Network Transfer Protocol for the duration of the placement. This could be several years if the child(ren) in placement were long term matched
- Should the child in placement move on, subsequent placements would not continue at the same rate. The IFA carer would then receive allowances for the subsequent children in placement at the revised 2019/20 fees and allowances rate
- That they may have children placed under 11 years and have other children in the household including birth children

Once an IFA carer transferred over, if their existing child in placement moved on and a new child placed with them, the IFA Foster Carer Transfer Protocol would allow up to a level 4 skills payment of £360 per week to be paid to the carer in addition to the age-related birthday/celebration and holiday allowances as set out in the report submitted. All allowances would be subject to a skills level assessment based upon their experience as a foster carer.

The proposed criteria for IFA Foster Carers Transfer Protocol was set out in the report submitted.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

17. CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE

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 August, 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.

The report drew attention to:-

- 22 children admitted to care and 16 ceased to be Looked After giving a total of 642 LAC at the end of the month. The rate of LAC per 10,000 population remained high at 112.7% which was exceptionally high in comparison to statistical neighbours at 87.8%
- The percentage of children who were discharged from Care this financial year due to permanence was 38.2% compared to 31.7% in 2018-19 and 27.3% in 2017/18
- The average of children admitted to care in August was 5 years of age. Performance data evidenced that the younger a child came into Care the shorter the time they spent in Care, the greater the chance of them moving to permanence and the less expensive their placement costs
- The percentage distribution by legal status remained consistent with 55% of children subject to full Care Orders, 29% on an Interim Care Order, 10% on Placement Orders with Care Order and 5% under Section 20. 1% (4 children) were Accommodated with breaks
- There had been a decline in performance in Care Plans, LAC Reviews and Statutory Visits; 82.7% of Care Plans were up-to-date as at the end of August and 88% of Statutory Reviews were undertaken in time. Statutory Visits also declined from 98.4% in July to 92.4% at the end of August
- Long term placement stability had increased to 64.8% of children in long term placements for at least 2 years, closing the gap towards the statistical neighbour average of 67.6%
- The number of children experiencing 3 or more placement moves had reduced over the year to 12.1%
- 79.3% of LAC placed in family based settings including internal fostering, independent fostering, pre-adoption placements and those

placed with parent/family/friends

- The percentage of children placed in a commissioned placement had reduced to 52.3% at the end of August. This was 16 fewer commissioned placements than at the end of July
- 91.7% of initial Health Assessments were undertaken in time (11 out of 12 children) which gave 84% for the year to date
- 89.1% of LAC had an up-to-date assessment as at the end of August. This had remained consistent across the year to date
- Dental assessments were currently reported at 63.6%. There would be a drive over the final 2 quarters of the year to address the data inputting issue
- 97.5% of eligible LAC population had a had a PEP and 95% of LAC had a PEP meeting during the 2018-19 term
- At the end of July, 14.8% of LAC were classed as persistent absentees, a reduction compared to the previous months but remained above the statistical neighbour figure of 10%
- Of the children who had been in care for 12 months or more, 9.8% had at least one fixed term exclusion as at the end of July
- At the end of July 10.7% of all LAC on reduced timetable arrangements
- The numbers of Care Leavers eligible for a service stood at 321 at the end of August, an all year high. The rise in the number since the start of 2019 was more than that of a full caseload for a Personal Advisor
- A decline in the number of Care Leavers with a Pathway Plan (86.1%) at the start of the year to 84.2%. The number with an up-to-date Pathway Plan had reduced to 80.8% from 88.6% in May. This would be an area of focus for the Leaving Care Teams in the coming months.
- The number of care leavers who were in Education, Employment or Training had remained consistent at 62.1%
- 66.4% of LAC were in foster placements
- 9 households and 7 deregistered since April. This was a net increase of 2 households for the year to date, totalling 147 in-house fostering households
- 16 assessments were currently being undertaken with a further 9

prospective carers at stage 1 with the potential of progressing to a full assessment and 17 enquiries leading to 2 Initial Visits over the course of August

- A further Foster Carer Diversity Community Event had been held in September
- 3 adoptions had been finalised over the course of August bringing the 2019/20 total to 16
- 31 children were currently placed with their adoptive parents 5 of whom had lodged their application and a further 23 whose placement was longer than the required 10 weeks but who were yet to lodge
- A further 12 children with a matching family identified but not yet placed and a further 25 children for whom family finding was continuing
- 16 adoptions were slightly above the target of 426 days between a child entering care and having an adoption placement at 449 days
- 4 adopters had already been approved this financial year with 15 being assessed
- LAC average caseloads had remained relatively stable over the last 3 months with a slight increase in teams 1-3 and a decrease in teams 4-5 during August

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

18. CHAMPIONS' FEEDBACK

The Chair invited Peter Douglas and Tina Hohn to give an update on the Virtual School:-

Early Years and Primary

- Results had been excellent
- GLD = 82% - the highest it had ever been and exceeded what was expected locally
- Y1 Phonics, KS1 and KS2 had performed better than ever
- A meeting had taken place with Early Years with regard to Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for 2 year olds which was considered to have had a massive impact. The children were ready for school, education and learning
- The advisors were driving education in every school they visited
- There were still issue around exclusions but it was known why and what could be done about them

Secondary

- KS4 – results were currently being verified but there had been a significant improvement
- Exclusions – although the figure was identical to that of the previous year, the detail of the exclusions showed the work that had been carried out with schools in managing most of the behaviours of the young people
- There had been 3 exclusions during the current half term already – need to look at other support that could be offered to schools
- The number of exclusions in out-of-authority young people had levelled out
- Still a work to be done to improve the situation

The Virtual School annual report would contain all the information with a number of actions plans for all the areas it wanted to develop. 2 FTE members of staff had been appointed to the Early Years and Primary and consideration would be given as to how to intervene much earlier than the age of 2.

19. LAC UPDATE

There was no-one present from the LAC Council due to the illness of Lisa Duvall.

The update would be presented at the next meeting.

20. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Tuesday, 17th December, 2019, commencing at 3.30 p.m.