

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday, 17th December, 2019

Present:- Councillor Watson (in the Chair); Councillors M. Elliott and Jarvis, Alisa Barr, Lynda Briggs, Peter Douglas, Catherine Hall, Sally Hodges, Tina Hohn, Ian Walker and Cathryn Woodward.

Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment, was in attendance for Minute No. 23 (Looked After Children's Promises).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cusworth and Duvall.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

22. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15TH OCTOBER, 2019

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th October, 2019.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th October, 2019, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

23. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S PROMISES - REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment, gave a verbal update on the work of his Directorate with regard to Looked After Children's Promises and apprenticeships in particular.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Discussions were ongoing with regard to leisure passes for LAC and any possible financial penalty for the Council. A further meeting was to be held later that week
- Possibility of working in partnership/engagement in regeneration activity such as the development of Forge Island
- Consideration should be given to any discount arrangements also including young carers and those who looked after Looked After Children. This could incentivise people to become Rotherham foster carers
- A repeated request by young people was discount arrangements for the gym
- Rotherham was at risk of becoming an outlier in terms of the offer to its care leavers
- The Directorate had a high number of apprenticeships in Highways and Streets sections but only for LAC

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- From experience of other projects, a great amount of work was required to get a young person to the point where they could experience a successful apprenticeship. A work readiness programme was needed
- The Leaving Care Team linked up with higher education facilities and supported the young person to access the support available and would do so up until the age of 25 years. They had successfully supported young people into employment from university in the past
- What could the Authority do other than financial support? Could there be a partnership agreement offering mentoring

The Panel had not managed to progress prioritisation for care leavers with regard to apprenticeships across the Council. A key objective for 2020 was to improve the care offer, work experience, apprenticeships and hopefully employment for our care leavers.

However, there was a need to know what the young people would be interested in and then ascertain what was on offer by the Directorates and them given some priority consideration to offset the disadvantages they faced.

Paul was thanked for his attendance.

Resolved:- That the Chair meet with the Assistant Chief Executive and discuss what work opportunities/training/apprenticeships were on offer currently across the Council.

24. SOUTH YORKSHIRE AND BASSETLAW - COMMITMENT TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Catherine Hall, Designated Nurse LAC, presented the above report setting out the rationale to develop a strong health and wellbeing presence within South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw ICS to ensure that children in care had their individual health and welfare needs met in the most effective and efficient manner.

It was proposed that the work include health commissioners, providers and local authorities who had a significant interest in the health care of LAC.

It was noted that The Foundation Trust had reduced the monthly reporting of Initial Health Assessments to 6 monthly.

It was noted that an analysis had been undertaken of the after-school and change of venue appointments for health assessments and it would be submitted to the next Panel meeting.

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

(2) That the analysis of after-school and change of venue appointments for health assessments be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel.

25. ILACS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Ian Walker, Head of Services, presented for information, the revised self-assessment for LAC and care leavers.

It provided identified actions for the next 12 months

Agreed:- That the report be noted.

(2) That regular progress reports be submitted to the Panel on the implementation of the plan.

26. NOTIFICATION PROCESS FOR SOUTH YORKSHIRE AND BASSETLAW LOCAL AUTHORITIES WHEN A CHILD IN CARE IS PLACED WITHIN OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Catherine Hall, RCCG, presented the above paper.

Rotherham had a very good LAC offer but when children moved to other areas it was not the same experience. Work had taken place to urge others to look at what happened when a child moved out of their area and how quick they notified the recipient local authority/health service/education services know.

As a result the submitted document had been produced.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

27. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION FOR FOSTER CARERS

In accordance with Minute No. 11 (Demand Management Strategy), details of a scheme proposed by Flintshire County Council with regard to reducing the Council Tax payable by foster carers as from April, 2020.

Agreed:- (1) That the Chair contact Flintshire County Council regarding their proposed scheme.

(2) That the Chair discuss with the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services to ascertain potential costs of such a scheme to the Authority.

28. CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE REPORT - OCTOBER 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

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Services for October, 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:-

- 16 children admitted to care and 14 ceased to be Looked After giving a total of 626 LAC at the end of the month. There were a further 47 children with confirmed plans for discharge before the end of 2019. Given the average monthly rate of admissions to care in 2019/20 (19), it was projected that the numbers would reduce by the end of 2019
- The percentage of children who were discharged from Care this financial year due to permanence was 37.3% compared to 31.5% 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
- There had been an improvement in performance in Care Plans, LAC Reviews and Statutory Visits. Statutory Visits had increased to 96.8% and consistently above 94% for the whole year evidenced embedded good practice compared to 74% compared to 2 years ago
- 91.4% of Care Plans were up-to-date and 89.2% of LAC cases were reviewed within timescales
- Long term placement stability had slightly decreased to 61.7% of children in long term placements for at least 2 years, however, there was an increase in the number of children eligible to meet the measure rather than a reduction in the number of children in a stable placement
- The number of children experiencing 3 or more placement moves had improved in the last 12 months but had seen a slight reduction in October (11.9%) compared to 12.3% in August
- 78.3% 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 53.4% in October. However, this performance needed to be sustained for some months in order to address the ongoing placement budget pressures. Further work was planned to identify the children who could move from an IFA to in-house placements to

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assist the issue

- A year to date figure of 83.7% initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days. This was significantly higher than the previous year end figures the best year being 2017/18 of 55.7% and 2018/19 of 51.1%
- 84.4% of LAC had an up-to-date assessment as at the end of October. This was the lowest performance for this year so far. Further investigation revealed that 19 of the overdue health assessments were due to young people refusing their assessments
- Dental assessments had increased to 86.1%, the highest performance reported since April. Some of the shortfall was due to young people refusing to access their dental assessments
- 97.5% of eligible LAC population had a had a PEP and 95% of LAC had a PEP meeting during the 2018-19 term
- Of the children who had been in care for 12 months or more, 14.4% 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, 7.8% had at least one fixed term exclusion as at the end of October
- At the end of October 5.5% of all LAC were on reduced timetable arrangements
- The numbers of Care Leavers eligible for a service stood at 321 at the end of October, an all year high
- The number of Care Leavers with a Pathway Plan (89.3%) remained stable and 86.4% having an up-to-date Plan at the end of October
- 96.6% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation and 62% were in employment, education or training
- 67.1% of LAC were in foster placements
- Since April 12 new households had been recruited and 2 deregistered. A further 9 had resigned from the in-house fostering service giving a total of 148 in-house fostering households
- 13 assessments of potential new fostering households were to be presented to Panel by the end of the financial year together with an additional 11 placement to become available by the end of January by virtue of the revised allowance scheme

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- Brightsparks was starting to show some impact with 29 information visits taking place over the course of October and 10 more strong leads to be followed up
- 3 adoptions had been finalised over the course of October bringing the 2019/20 total to 20
- 26 children were currently placed with their adoptive parents 5 of whom had lodged their application 3 of whom had a court date set. A further 12 children with a match identified and family finding ongoing for another 9 children
- The current forecast was approximately 34 adoptions by the end of 2019/20
- 7 revocations of Placement Orders were currently being undertaken
- 20 adoptions were slightly above the target of 426 days between a child entering care and having an adoption placement at 451 days
- The national target for the number of days between a child receiving a Placement Order and being match to an adoptive family was 121 days; the average for the children adopted so far was above the target at 161 days
- 8 adoptive families had already been approved this financial year
- LAC average caseloads had decreased slightly for the long term LAC teams (1-3) but increased for the court and permanence teams (4 and 5) due to 3 social workers and 1 advanced practitioner leaving the team

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- The Virtual School would be setting RAG performance targets
- The number of foster carer resignations had been due to long term illness, bereavement and natural cessation. Rotherham's demographic of foster carers was that of elderly
- Adoption Team still in the process of review and when complete would be submitted to the Panel
- Inclusion of reference to foster carers and the Adoption Service and relevant contact numbers on the Holderness Ward e-newsletter. It was noted that this had been sent to the Neighbourhoods Team for inclusion in the newsletters

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

29. CHAMPIONS' FEEDBACK

There was no feedback.

It was noted that the Chair would assume the role of Health Champion.

30. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN UPDATE

Due to the illness of Lisa Duvalle there was no young people present at the meeting.

31. FUTURE AGENDA ITEM

Legality and Status of Looked After Children

32. 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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4 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/information relating to any consultations or negotiations).

33. REVIEW OF LADO PROCESS AND ITS IMPACT ON FOSTER CARER RETENTION

Ian Walker, Head of Service, submitted for information the current position of the review of the LADO process and its impact on foster care retention.

It was noted that the review was still ongoing.

Resolved:- That the current position of the review be noted.

34. IAN WALKER

The Chair reported that this would be Ian's last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The Panel wished him well for the future and thanked him for all his work on behalf of the Panel.

35. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a meeting of the Panel be held on Tuesday, 31st March, 2020, commencing at 3.30 p.m.