

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday, 30th June, 2020

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

Apologies for absence:- Sally Hodges and Sue Wilson

48. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 4 February 2020, were approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

50. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items for which it was necessary to exclude members of the press or public.

51. LAC COUNCIL UPDATE

An update on the activities of the LAC Council was presented for the information of the panel. It was noted that for the next virtual meeting it would be arranged to have the LAC representatives themselves in attendance.

52. COVID-19 UPDATE

An update was provided for the information of the Panel as to the developments pertaining to health care for Looked After Children and Young People, especially in view of COVID-19. The Panel were first presented with a reflection on a positive outcome of a conference event, prior to COVID-19, to which the LAC Council contributed. The panel were also informed of the status of ongoing collaboration among designated nurses to streamline data collection and processing. A new named doctor and three staff nurses will be newly added to the team designated for Looked After Children and Young People to provide continuity and consistency. These developments took into consideration the voice of the Young People, who stated they desired to have continuity with staff rather than telling their story over and over to a new staff member at each visit. The staff were therefore able to become specialists and improve quality by changing their language in specific ways, standardising data maintenance procedures, and making the experience more child-friendly. A few face-to-face contacts were resuming, but video and phone contacts would be continued as desired. It was noted that the services have been successfully provided throughout and despite the COVID-19 crisis to a

very high standard despite the accompanying challenges. Discussions were taking place around Young People's needs as they return to school. It was considered how technology-mediated communication may be enduringly useful in providing the service in the future. It was noted that these efforts have been essential safeguarding work and will inform our delivery of services in the future.

53. CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE REPORT - APRIL 2020

The Panel considered a performance report and data that was presented for information. The pathways of children through care were examined, and comparisons with the previous month's performance numbers were supplied. Further comparisons with national targets as well as with performance numbers from last year were also noted. Where applicable, it was noted that COVID-19 had influenced some statistics such as the lower number of dental visits during a period in which dentists had been closed. Visits in general had dropped for that reason. During lockdown, IROs were not traveling out of areas. As there were virtual reviews undertaken, there was no need to cancel reviews, which was a benefit to children that was reflected in the numbers. It was noted that the use of various technology and social media allowed the collection of feedback directly from the young people at varying points in the review process. It was advised that education performance numbers were measured by the term rather than by the month, therefore those numbers would be reflected next month. It was emphasised that mitigating efforts around diet and care could help during this period of not being able to go to the dentist. It was also observed that dental care in South Yorkshire has been a neglected area among the general population, and that some children possibly needed to be prioritised to be seen by dentists because of prior neglect. It was further emphasised that for Looked After Children who had not had a PEP meeting conducted, this was in most cases because they had ceased to be looked after before a PEP meeting could be conducted for that year, or because they came into care just after the cycle had been completed. Finally a word of praise was offered by the Chair who noted for the record his thanks to staff who have been tirelessly providing these services.

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

Attention was given to a report presented by Councillor Victoria Cusworth, regarding the findings of a subcommittee review on the LADO process. Concerns that some foster carers had received inadequate support had been investigated as part of this review. The sub-group had met 4 times over 8 months and had consulted with officers and partners.

The process required that all allegations were thoroughly investigated in a fair and balanced way and involved parties informed of the outcomes. It was assured that consistency and continuity was provided throughout the shift from the single designated LADO officer to the current process in

which a single manager oversaw the allegation through to the end of the investigation. Logs were kept so that patterns and trends could be noticed.

Details were provided regarding praise that this system had garnered for exemplary good practice. There had been a subsequent decline in de-registrations and resignations of foster carers. It was noted that a fine balance had been established and maintained between safeguarding the young people and supporting the foster carers.

In discussion, it was clarified that, if there were a breakdown or an unplanned move, such cases automatically were reported back to the Fostering Panel. To provide assurance, without going into case detail, officers offered to provide a general overview of LADO case figures that go through these processes.

55. SETTLED STATUS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN WHO ARE E.U. CITIZENS

Attention was given to a report updating the panel of progress towards settled status for Looked After Children who are also citizens of the European Union. It was noted that following the planned departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union it was important to arrange settled status for children in care of the authority who would otherwise possibly be required to return to a country of origin in which they have no experience or family connections.

Work has been completed in order to identify the cohort of children in need of settled status. Of the 65 paper applications received, 30 of those had been completed, with the aim to have the rest completed by the end of July. Feedback from the Home Office has been positive, with requests for Rotherham MBC staff to support others in the region.

The pandemic has interrupted work, and has resulted in suspension in some operations of services associated with the Home Office and relevant Embassies throughout the European Union. Further updates are forthcoming to the Panel at subsequent meetings. Of 79 children in total, we were not yet approaching half having had their paperwork resolved.

In discussion, it was wondered if extensions might be allowed in view of the extenuating situation. Assurance was provided that these children's needs are being progressed according to the original timeline. If it did so happen that the paperwork could not be completed on the current timeline, these children would still be in care with no risk of immediate deportation. In such a situation, the applications would then have to be progressed under the new circumstances, but there was no reason at this time to anticipate that eventuality will be necessary.

56. URGENT BUSINESS

It was the view of the Chair that a call-out regarding recruitment for membership of the Fostering Panel would be appropriate and much appreciated.

57. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chair announced the next virtual meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be held on 1 September 2020, commencing at 3.30 pm.