

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday, 21st January, 2014

Present:- Councillor Lakin (in the Chair); Councillors Dodson, Doyle, Havenhand, G. A. Russell, Sharman and Vines.

Also in attendance were: - M. McDermott, R. Wall, L. Alcock, P. Grimwood, C. Sneath, M. Smith, M. Connolley, P. Bradley, A. Banks, C. Hall, C. Pyper, S. Wilson, and P. Dempsey.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Falvey, and from C. Brodhurst-Brown (P. Grimwood representing) and . L. Grice-Saddington (R. Wall representing).

D1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were made.

D2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12TH NOVEMBER, 2013, AND MATTERS ARISING.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 12th November, 2013, were discussed.

In relation to Item 6 (National Adoption Week, 2013), Paul Dempsey reported that the Daily Mail had run a story about an adopting family. This positive case study was also due to be featured on Look North.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

D3. COMMUNICATIONS.

Councillor P. Lakin, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, raised two issues under this item: -

Resolved: - (1) That a training session for the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Improving Lives Select Commission be arranged in respect of the role of Corporate Parent by the Safeguarding Children and Families' Service within Children and Young People's Services Directorate.

(2) That a programme of visits to Out-of-Authority Residential Homes be undertaken by Officers and Elected Members.

D4. ANNE-MARIE BANKS, FOSTERING TEAM MANAGER.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services welcomed Anne-Marie Banks, Fostering Team Manager to the meeting.

D5. POST-16 ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services thanked those Officers who had been responsible for arranging the event, it had been well planned and attended and had been an enjoyable event to attend.

The Consultant Headteacher/Virtual Headteacher reported that: -

- This was an annual event supported by the Mayor of Rotherham;
- The event was in recognition and celebration of the achievements of the young people who had been, or were still, in our care, in the areas of education, employment or training.

The 2013 event: -

- Had a total of 60 award winners;
- The awards ceremony was attended by 24 young people;
- One young person travelled from Manchester to receive his award and another from Chester;
- Each young person received a certificate acknowledging their achievements, together with gift vouchers to the value of £25;
- Award winners included the cohort who took GCSE exams in 2013, together with Looked After Children and care leavers who had achieved in education, training or employment since leaving school, including young people with SEN;
- Two of the award winners had gained a degree; one in Sports Science and the other in Criminology. Other achievements included completing training courses, gaining employment or an apprenticeship, and completing college courses. The range of achievements was amazing – horticulture, animal care, motor vehicle studies, hospitality, catering etc;
- A tremendous sense of pride was evident - not only from the young people themselves, but from everyone in the room. The commitment, resilience and hard work of all of the young people receiving awards was exemplary. The college tutor of one young person, on hearing that he was to receive an award, commented, 'I wish I could have a class full of Liams' (not his real name).

The Post-16 Achievement Awards for Looked After Children was a wonderful event, reflecting not only the fantastic achievements of the young people themselves, but also the commitment of everyone who supported and encouraged them through 'corporate parenting' on their journey to success.

Resolved: - (1) That the celebration event held on 11th December, 2013, to mark the education, employment and training achievements of Looked After, and Previously Looked After, young people be noted.

(2) That the congratulations of the Corporate Parenting Panel be passed on to all of the young people who had won awards.

(3) That the thanks of the Corporate Parenting Panel be passed on to the Officers who arranged the event.

D6. THE ENTITLEMENTS INQUIRY - APPG FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS.

The Service Manager for Family Placements and Residential (Safeguarding Children and Families' Services, Children and Young People's Services Directorate) reported on the findings of the All Party Parliamentary Group's 'Entitlements Inquiry'.

The Inquiry had devised ten questions relating to entitlements for Looked After Children. It had found that many Looked After Children and recent care leavers were not aware of what they were legally entitled to on leaving care. 50% were aware that they were entitled to a payment of £2,000 when they left care; only 34% of care leavers received this.

It was suggested that the ten questions could be asked of a sample of Rotherham's looked after children, to determine local understanding and potential areas of awareness raising.

Resolved: - (1) That the update be received and the points raised noted.

(2) That an update report be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel's March, 2014, meeting, including the responses and views of a sample of Rotherham's looked after children.

(3) That the Improving Lives Select Commission be invited to participate in this exercise.

D7. SELF-ASSESSMENT OF ADOPTION SERVICE AGAINST THE OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK.

The Service Manager for Family Placements and Residential reported on the outcomes of a self-assessment that had been undertaken on the Adoption Service using the Ofsted inspection framework.

Overall, 21% of the children and young people leaving care were adopted. This was higher than national comparators. Rotherham was focussing efforts on the groups that were traditionally hard to place, including children above five years old and children from BME groups.

Some areas' performance had decreased, including the number of days taken from children entering care to being matched for adoption. In Rotherham it was 659 days, whereas the target was 608 days. The Service Manager shared specific examples of reasons why placement could sometimes take longer than the target. The delay could sometimes

be caused by the need to ensure that actions were in a child's or sibling groups' best interests.

Discussion ensued and the Elected Members in attendance asked: -

- The Service Manager to ensure that permanency for children was at the forefront of all decisions;
- For more information on placement breakdowns;
- Demographic information;
- How children were selected for adoption and the need to avoid concentrating efforts and resources on 'easy to place' children at the expense of children who were 'harder to place';
- The use of the Adoption Reform Grant and its time-limited nature;
- Use of in-house provision and placements.

Resolved: - (1) That the information provided to the present time be noted.

(2) That further updates be provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel in due course.

D8. SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE AGAINST THE OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK - REPORT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT.

The Director for Safeguarding Children and Families' Services (Children and Young People's Services Directorate) reported on the outcome of the July 20?? Inspection of ?? Services.

The outcome had been that a Good service operated that generally met the needs of children. A requirement was that the range of foster carers needed to be increased, especially for children over ten.

In relation to NI63, Rotherham scored well on in-house fostering; 82% of looked-after children achieved permanence and long-term stability. This had been achieved through supported lodgings and an increased use of in-house foster carers. Rotherham did not place children with relatives as often compared to national average, and the use of Special Guardianship Orders was also low.

Resolved: - (1) That the information provided to the present time be noted.

(2) That further consideration of the report be undertaken at the March meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

D9. FIRST SIX-MONTHS' PROGRESS OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER SERVICE (APRIL TO SEPTEMBER, 2013).

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Safeguarding

Manager that outlined the progress of the practice in relation to children looked after by Rotherham Local Authority and the progress made during 2012-2013 in strengthening the Independent Reviewing Officer role in Rotherham's Children and Young People's Service.

- Caseloads were slightly higher than the recommended level;
- 97.46% of reviews were being completed in timescale, 27 had been completed out of timescale. The reasons for these had been explored and legitimate reasons were found, including travel difficulties and disruptions. National performance was around 90%;
- Voice – 21% of reviews were not being attended by the child or young person. However, where appropriate, their input was often achieved in other ways;
- 12 additional Independent Visitors had been recruited;
- The Service also acted as a dispute resolution service, including raising informal concerns relating to case recording and missing file items;
- Independent Reviewing Officers could broker involvement with birth parents, create child-centred environments and recognise and respond to the needs of sibling groups;
- Independent Reviewing Officers strongly contributed to work around a child's identity, including religious support and support for dual-heritage children and young people.

Continuing issues for improvement: -

- Working with Health partners to record information;
- The IT system CCM was not allowing full recording and reporting to take place;
- Working with CAHMS on Tier 3 and 4 access and developing a strategy that reflected current needs.

The Cabinet Member noted these continuing issues and expected updates on their progress.

Resolved: - (1) That the report be received and its content noted.

(2) That the issue of CCM system not allowing reports to be generated be followed-up, and the outcome reported to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services on its progress.

(3) That the March meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel receive an update in relation to CAHMS and Rotherham's access to Tier 4 provision, to include links to Tier 3 provision, the developing needs-led strategy and the schedule of charging between NHS England and the Local Authority.

(4) That the Independent Reviewing Team Service submit their year-end report to the Corporate Parenting Panel in due course.

D10. RESIDENTIAL HOMES - SIX MONTH REVIEW - ISSUES EMERGING FROM REG 33/34 AND OFSTED INSPECTIONS.

The Manager of Provider Services provided an update in relation to the Regulation 33 and 34 visits to Residential Homes that had taken place since the last meeting. Visits were undertaken monthly by an independent person.

Permanency at Woodview Residential Home was good with a number of placements being established for several years. More recent placements were also well settled.

Silverwood Residential Home was used as emergency accommodation. Fifteen children and young people had accessed the provision over a six-month period and had moved on to their next step within the expected timescale.

Liberty House had been judged by Ofsted to be a Good setting in December, 2013.

Other issues included: -

- Continuing conversations and work around children who went missing was ongoing, and the countering of Child Sexual Exploitation, including reducing the frequency and length of time children went missing for and staff training to identify signs of concern;
- Working with other Partners;
- Staffing for residential homes: -
 - There had been a reduced use of agency staff;
 - Sickness levels were low.
- Repairs: -
 - The quality of some repairs undertaken was not consistent;
 - The Council's Environment and Development Services Directorate had undertaken work on the recording documents that were in use to strengthen them;
 - Specific ongoing repairs were considered.

The Cabinet Member expected that ongoing repairs that were being undertaken to be completed as a matter of priority. Corporate Parenting was a duty and expectation that was Council-wide.

Resolved: - (1) That urgent discussions be undertaken with the Environment and Development Services Directorate in relation to ensuring that all incomplete jobs relating to property condition were completed to a satisfactory standard immediately and all Health and Safety regulations were met at all times.

(2) That the information shared be noted.

(3) That further updates be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel relating to Residential Homes.

D11. LAC STRATEGY STATEMENT.

The Service Manager for Family Placements and Residential updated the Corporate Parenting Panel on the developing Strategy for Looked After Children. Broadly, the Statement aimed to narrow the gap between looked after children and their non-looked after peers. The document would also seek to represent children and young people's voice and also reaffirm the role of members and officers as corporate parents.

The Strategy contained five Priority Objectives: -

- **Priority One:** - To ensure the degree and timeliness of placement stability and permanence and ensure children are able to enjoy continuity of relationships;
- **Priority Two:** - To improve the emotional wellbeing and physical health of looked after children;
- **Priority Objective Three:** - To improve educational progress and attainment and narrow the gap between attainment of looked after children and their non-looked after peers;
- **Priority Objective Four:** - To improve support for and opportunities open to care leavers sufficiently to increase the number and proportion of them who are in employment, education or training (EET);
- **Priority Objective Five:** - To listen to children and young people so as to ensure that their views influence their own plans, as well as wider service delivery and development.

It was suggested that the Improving Lives Select Commission be asked to undertake a focussed review on the developing Strategy document.

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

(2) That further updates be provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel as the Looked After Children Strategy Statement develops.

D12. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN.

The Service Manager for Family Placements and Residential reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel on the developing draft Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children. This Strategy was linked to the LAC Strategy that had been considered in the previous item.

Analysis of Rotherham's existing provision, and especially any gaps, had taken place: -

- Foster Care for children and young people over the age of ten;

- Fostering Plus;
- Developing a rewards and support system for Fosterers who offered provision that had been traditionally hard to cover;
- The potential to take Rotherham's areas of over provision in foster care to the wider market;
- Review existing provision available in the Residential Homes, including length of placement and number of beds;
- Out-of-Authority placements;
- Innovative Marketing;
- Fostering to Adopt;
- Special Guardianship and Residence Orders.

CIPFA benchmarking of placement costs in Rotherham compared to national data was considered. It was not known how other local authorities calculated their costs and whether there was a true like-for-like comparison available.

It was requested that an update on the developing strategy be presented to the Improving Lives Select Commission.

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

(2) That the Improving Lives Select Commission receive an update and be invited to comment on the developing Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children.

(3) That further updates be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel as the Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children develops.

D13. CHANGING ROTHERHAM'S RESIDENTIAL PROVISION TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE FUTURE COHORT OF CHILDREN.

This update had been provided as part of the presentation in relation to the Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children.

Issues would include consideration of the changing population and needs of the cohort.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.

D14. LEAVING AND AFTER CARE SERVICE.

The Director of Safeguarding Children and Families' Services provided an update to the Corporate Parenting Panel on the return of the leaving and after care service to the Council.

Minute No. C121 (Re-Commissioning Of Leaving Care And Looked After Children's Services) from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6th November, 2013, recorded the decision to transfer the Service back into the Council.

The report showed the timetable to bring the Service back into the Council following the existing contract with Action for Children ending on 31st March, 2014.

The Leaving and After Care Service would be based in Riverside House alongside other social care teams and partners. The service would use the Eric Manns Building as a base to run activities and work with young people.

Communications were continuing with the young people who were using the Service to reassure them about the changes. Bringing the Service in-house intended to offer young people the chance of staying with the same worker/s for the full period between the ages of 16-25 where necessary.

Resolved: - (1) That a communications strategy be designed to inform all young people in the appropriate age-range of the changes to the Service and reassuring them about the changes.

(2) That the information shared be noted.

D15. CLOSING REMARKS.

Councillor P. Lakin, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel thanked the Officers in attendance for their continued efforts overall and their contribution to the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting.

D16. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING -

Resolved: - (1) That the next meeting take place on Tuesday 11th March, 2014, to start at 9.30 a.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall.

(2) That future meetings take place on: -

- Tuesday 20th May, 2014;
- Tuesday 8th July, 2014.

Both to start at 9.30 a.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall.