

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Corporate Parenting Panel
2.	Date:	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2014
3.	Title:	Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report
4.	Directorate:	Safeguarding, Children and Families

### 5. Summary

Following the scrutiny review of Corporate Parenting the Corporate Parenting Board is now a well-established Board which is chaired by the lead member for Safeguarding, Children and Families and is attended regularly by other members, advisors and officers from across the different agencies working with looked after children including the Director of Safeguarding, Children and Families. A recommendation was for the panel to provide an Annual Report which should be forwarded to Improving Lives Select Commission.

This report therefore provides an update on the status of looked after children during the year 2013/14, as well as a forward look to the following year. The report should be considered alongside the data tables provided which is a year-end position. Comparison with performance in 2012/13 is given where appropriate.

### 6. Recommendations

- That the panel note the performance information and activity of the panel over the last 12 months
- That the panel agree with the next steps for 2014/15

### 7. Proposals and Details

#### 7.1 Key Performance Information

##### 7.1.1 Looked After Children and Placements of Mainstream LAC

At the end of the year, we had 400 LAC compared with 396 in April 2013. This figure is always subject to change as validation takes place well into the new year.

Our LAC was made up of 67.8% fostering placements, 12.9% children's homes or other residential accommodation, 9.4% placed for adoption, 4.6% placed with parents 2.3% independent living.

### **7.1.2 Commissioned Placements**

There were 102 children in a commissioned foster placement at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, compared to 113 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. This is reflected in lower projected cost of commissioned foster placements from £5,552,812 at the end of 2012/13 to £4,906,527 at the end of 2013/14.

The increase in the number of commissioned residential placements from 25 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 to 31 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 has resulted in an increase in projected cost from £2,719,206 at the end of 2012/13 to £3,600,475 At the end of 2013/14

### **7.1.3 Looked After Children Health Assessments**

The percentage of LAC receiving health assessments has increased to 88.5% for 2013/14, compared to 86.8% for 2012/13.

The percentage of LAC receiving dental assessments has increased to 73.4% in 2013/14, compared to 67.4% for 2012/13.

Work between health and local authority colleagues has helped to improve the recording of health and dental checks over the last 12 months. We are still working together to help ensure that all records are correlated correctly and that our processes remain efficient and streamlined. Further work is also underway in health which will increase the numbers of paediatric clinics available for a looked after child's initial review, therefore helping to provide early health assessments for our children when entering care.

### **7.1.4 Foster Carers**

We have 184 foster carers which is an increase of 20 on last year.

35 foster carers were recruited in 2013/14, with 15 deregistered.

The service received an Ofsted inspection in July 2013. 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.

Work is underway to establish our Fostering Plus Service, particularly for those more difficult to place teenagers. The scheme has now been approved, funding mechanisms agreed and initial adverts placed. There will be a number of branches to Fostering Plus as it develops including parent and child, severely disabled, challenging teenagers and one or two emergency carers paid a retention fee which will increase our emergency placements provision.

The service has completed a self-assessment against the new Ofsted inspection framework in preparation for the next inspection.

### **7.1.5 Adoptions**

During the year (13/14) 34 children were adopted, 23 of these were within timescales resulting in performance of 67.6% which is below benchmarking data but is in line with the previous year.

Other performance statistics, introduced nationally recently, show that performance in adoptions overall is improving. The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, has reduced from 659 days (2010-2013 3 year average) to 492 days (in the last six months of 2013/14)

The average time between a Placement Order being granted and the decision for a match for a child reduced by 25 days from 309 days in 2012/13 to 284 days in 2013/14.

While past performance has been lower than national benchmark this measure has significantly improved in 2013-14 and in a recent meeting with the DFE they made it clear that they were satisfied with Rotherham's progress.

At the end of March 2014 we had 53 children with a SHOBPA decision and 23 children that we are finding a family for. 37 children are placed for adoption 21 of which have a SHOBPA decision over 12 months old.

The service introduced the new two-stage process from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013.

The service have completed a self-assessment against the Ofsted inspection framework in preparation for the next inspection. This identifies strengths and weaknesses and helps managers develop plans to address key improvement areas.

### **7.1.6 Education**

88.9% (233/262) of LAC have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan. This is in line with the 88.1% as at March 2013, however, we have had an increase of 10 young people this year.

Of the 29 LAC without an up-to-date PEP, 11 have one that is over one year old and 16 do not have one recorded.

The Post-16 Achievement Awards for looked after children was an event 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.

A detailed report was presented in November with recommendations to continue to provide support and challenge to raise the attainment, achievement and aspirations of all of Rotherham's Looked After Children; and to continue to raise expectations for Looked After Children, and champion their needs, to ensure that they reach their full potential and their life chances are enhanced.

From an improvement point of view, new PEP formats have been developed and approved and will be implemented asap. All PEPs are currently quality assured by the Virtual School/ Get Real Team (GRT) manager. A new improved document has

been developed for quality assurance which will be completed by the Virtual Headteacher/ Virtual School Manager/ Deputy Manager, and will be sent to the social worker and to the school. Areas for improvement will be made very clear. Designated teachers have been asked to take more responsibility for the quality of PEPs.

Virtual School/ GRT staff are involved in peer improvement work with other LAs, with a significant focus on improving the quality of PEPs . A moderation meeting will be held in Bradford in the near future.

The Virtual Headteacher now has responsibility for the allocation and monitoring of the pupil premium plus. Schools are expected to return pupil progress information, and a PEP action plan which is linked to the use of the pupil premium. Targets on the action plan, which will be incorporated into the next PEP, will be monitored. If they are not sufficiently robust, payment of the pupil premium will be deferred until suitable targets are evident. It is hoped that this strategy will lead to improvements in the quality of PEPs.

For this financial year, the pupil premium is being allocated at £500 per term, with £400 being retained centrally pending further consultation. In some LAs the final payment will be retained until there is a quality PEP on the system.

In March 71% of LAC went to a 'good or better' school either in Rotherham or out of authority.

#### **7.1.7 OFSTED Ratings for Children's Residential Establishments (as at end of March)**

<b>Children's Homes</b>	<b>Rating as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014</b>	<b>Rating as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013</b>	<b>DOT</b>
Cherry Tree	Adequate	Good	Down
Liberty House	Adequate	Adequate	Equal
Silverwood	Good	Good	Equal
St. Edmund's	Adequate	Good	Down
Wood View	Good	Good	Equal

During the year work has started with the residential units to carry out self-assessments. This will lead to an improvement programme and will focus on working together across all units to share best practice and identify areas for development.

#### **7.1.8 Care leavers in suitable accommodation**

This cohort now includes young people aged 19-21 years, and therefore is a much larger group than previous years/quarters.

96.4% (103/107) of care leavers are living in suitable accommodation, which is a slight increase on the 94% at the end of March 2013. Of those that are not, 3 of them are in custody.

We also have 2 young people that have been deported. These have been counted as part of those in suitable accommodation.

#### **7.1.9 Care leavers in employment, education or training**

All young people have appropriate Pathway Plans in place which address EET; where not in EET, they address employability and education readiness skills.

53.6% (56/107) of care leavers are in employment, education or training compared with 66.7% at the end of March 2013.

47 of our young care leavers are not in employment, education or training due to disability or illness; pregnancy or parenting; or other circumstances.

This age group are able to claim benefit in their own right, and live independently and therefore are an extremely hard group to engage in any form of learning. We, as a service, are endeavouring to work more closely with Job Centre Plus to provide a more coherent approach to this group. This cohort now includes young people aged 19-21 years, and therefore is a much larger group than previous years/quarters.

#### **7.1.10 Children Missing From Care or Home**

There were 411 instances of children missing from care or home from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, relating to 149 children. This is an increase on the previous year when we had 311 instances involving 121 children.

22 children during the 12 months have been reported as going missing as both LAC & from home in different incidents. Therefore the same 22 children are included twice in the number of children.

In January 2014 The Department of Education published new statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care.

Rotherham's protocol was updated last year to ensure that it is up to date with the revised guidance. It was drafted in consultation with partners including South Yorkshire Police and Safe@last and endorsed by the safeguarding board. The regional protocol has not been updated. There are plans to redress this in 2014.

#### **7.1.11 Youth Offending**

4.1% (8/197) of LAC aged 10-17 and looked after for over a year had a Court Disposal, Reprimand or a Final Warning in 2013/14. This is a reduction on the 5.9% last year (11/186).

From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013, following a major service review, the Youth Offending Team became part of the fully integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS).

A quality and compliance review was carried out during the year, along with the management and closure of an improvement plan following an inspection. Governance arrangements have also been developed and regular performance reporting now takes place to the Youth Offending Board and the Safer Rotherham Partnership.

## **7.2 LAC Strategy**

In our role as corporate parents it is important that we set a clear strategic direction which enables our looked after children to have the best outcomes possible. Therefore the development of the LAC strategy is well underway and includes the following priorities;

Priority Objective 1:

To improve the degree and timeliness of placement stability and permanence and ensure children are able to enjoy continuity of relationships.

Priority Objective 2:

To improve the emotional wellbeing and physical health of looked after children.

Priority Objective 3:

To improve educational progress and attainment and narrow the gap between attainment of looked after children and their non-looked after peers.

Priority Objective 4:

To improve the 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 5:

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.

Various sub-groups have been tasked with delivering against these priorities and are asking and answering the following key questions;

- As a service, where do we want to be?
- Where are we now?
- How will we get from where we are now to where we want to be?
- How will we know we are there?

## **7.3 Sufficiency Strategy**

In addition to the LAC strategy it is also the duty of the local authority to ensure that we can provide the right kind of accommodation in the right places to meet the differing needs of all our looked after children. As such the strategy is essential for improving outcomes for looked after children.

It is a statutory requirement under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 for local authorities to secure, so far as reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation for looked after children in their local authority area.

#### Sufficiency Strategy Aims;

- To provide a sufficient range and number of local placements for Rotherham's looked after children that both contribute to improved outcomes and increase value for money.
- To reduce the number of children placed outside of the borough.
- To increase in-house fostering provision
- To reduce the number of children placed both in independent residential and independent foster care.
- To increase placement stability for looked after children
- To increase the percentage of children adopted from care and to improve the timeliness of such adoptions

### **7.4 White Rose Contract**

The White Rose Consortium has now expanded to include representation from twelve local authorities, the four in South Yorkshire, the five from west Yorkshire as well as Hull, York and North East Lincs. The consortium has already put in place regional commissioning frameworks for both independent fostering and independent residential placements. Tenders are currently being scored and assessed for a framework for post 16 provision and a timetable is now in place for the development of a framework for special educational needs (SEN) provision from April 2015.

The benefits to providers are that they operate within a single set of contracting and monitoring criteria dealing with a single named officer instead of twelve or more. Benefits for the authorities include shared best practice, reduction in duplication of effort and efficiencies which result from the combined purchasing power of the twelve authorities. All savings made as a result of utilising the regional frameworks are recurrent for as long as care is required for the young person and will increase as more placements are transferred to the frameworks over time

### **7.5 Invest to Save (Adoptions)**

The Adoption Service recruited and approved 31 new adopters in 2013/14 compared to the 18 approved in 2012/13. The 31 approved exceeds the invest to save target of 21 for 2013/14 by 10 adopters. As well as the 'invest to save' funding, the Adoption Service's performance has also been supported by the Government's Adoption Reform Grant, which has funded additional staffing in the service.

The Adoption Service Plan for 2014/15 has identified the following recruitment targets:

1. To recruit 42 new adoptive families in total for 2014/15
2. To recruit 4 families for children over 5 years of age, 12 families for sibling groups, and 9 families for black and minority ethnic children.

## **7.6 Invest to save (Fostering)**

Within the fostering service The Invest to save proposal focused on increasing the number of fostering households by March 2014. The first year target was to achieve a net increase of 12 fostering households and was achieved with the second year target of 18 being exceeded by 2. For 2013/14 the Fostering Service, through its success in carer recruitment and retention work, has achieved a net gain of 20 foster carers. Whilst this was a very strong performance the target for a net gain of 21 carers in the year was missed by one. The service was on course and projecting a net gain of 21 right up to March 2014 and was only thwarted in this objective by a delayed Disclosure and Barring Service check. The applicant that this related to was approved a month later in April and therefore this approval will impact on our 2014/15 performance rather than the 2013/14 figures.

The 2014-15 Fostering Service Development Plan has identified the following recruitment targets for the year ahead:

1. 10 new foster carers approved to care for looked after children aged 11-18 years
2. 10 new foster carers approved to care for sibling groups of looked after children
3. In total a net gain of 20 foster carers on our current numbers by end of 2014/15 (net gain that can incorporate 1 & 2)
4. 6 new foster carers approved for the Fostering Plus scheme (that is incorporated in 1)

## **7.7 The Childs Voice and Journey**

Looked after children are given a number of opportunities during their involvement with the service to have their voices heard through various channels. They have LAC review meetings, which cover the actual review of their placement and topics such as their health, school, work or college and the relationship with their social worker. Looked after children are represented on the LAC Council and there is also a national annual survey run by the Children's Commissioner. The foster carer review process also allows children the opportunity to share their feelings about their carer. Looked after children are also encouraged to make a complaint if they are not happy with anything which is then fed into the service

Included in all of this feedback are comments direct from children and young people explaining their thoughts and feelings and the difference that we have made for them.

Across the whole of Children and Young People Services we are currently collating feedback primarily from parents and carers and where appropriate, from children. Some service improvements are being made on a local level within the teams. More higher level analysis and transformational work from any recurring themes needs to be fed in to shaping our future services under the new OFSTED inspection framework. Understanding how children see and experience our Services is a vital part of our work.



We are exploring the possibility of a whole scale survey in Rotherham for all looked after children.

## **7.8 Leaving and After Care Service**

The Looked after Children Service for 16 and 17 year olds, the Leaving Care Service, and the Leaving Care Accommodation Service was commissioned by the Council from Action for Children until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. In November 2013 the Council took the decision not to externally commission these services, but instead to bring the services in-house and operate them once again as directly run local authority services.

Bringing the service in-house allows for significant savings to be made as we will avoid external provider's infrastructure and head office costs. This results in an immediate £124,370 saving based on the contract with Action for Children.

The in-house model proposed allows for young people to maintain their existing social worker through to age 18. The commissioned service results in a break in relationships at age 16, a crucial age and phase in their life, and again at 18, as they are beginning to move to independence. Continuity and stability of relationships for children and young people are essential for improving outcomes.

A report presented to the group by Mary-Ann Barton states that young people who have spent time in care tend to have poorer outcomes than their peers. Care leavers are more likely to have poor educational performance, contact with the criminal justice system, poorer health and be vulnerable to homelessness and unemployment. It is therefore very important that they are supported when they are leaving care and make the transition to adulthood. To support this objective, a piece of work has been done to examine the circumstances of young people leaving care from Rotherham and their outcomes in Education, Employment and Training and Accommodation.

## **7.9 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service**

The IRO Service performed a LAC review of performance around the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) from April 2013 to March 2014.

The majority of the concerns raised by IROs in respect of care planning for children were dealt with at the 'Informal stage'. However following an IRO Team away day and a refocus on using the DRP process, there has been an increase in the use of the DRP stage 1 in February and then DRP stage 2 in March.

Issues and themes at each stage of the process were revealed from the analysis work undertaken.

Since the end of December there has been a change in the way that DRP's are recorded and this has impacted on some of the data as issues around care planning are recorded more generally. A number of issues were raised around the quality of care plans. Consideration needs to be given to how this data is recorded in the future to ensure the themes are reflected more accurately.

There had been a significant number of informal concerns raised around statutory visits. There were 97 for 2013-2014 in comparison to 56 for the previous year. Please note if a matter is raised via informal concerns this should reflect that only 1 visit has been missed.

There has also been a significant increase with regard to more than one statutory visit missing for some children, and from February 2014 this has been rigorously addressed via DRP stage 1. This accounts for some of the increase in the use of DRP stage 1's in February and March 2014.

There have been 60 concerns around care plans either not being on file available for the review of the quality of care planning; this was at 36 for the previous year.

This year there were 159 informal concerns raised (143 last year). There were 35 issues raised via DRP stage 1 (22 last year). There have been 20 issues raised via DRP stage 2 (5 last year). A large number of the DRP Stage 1's and Stage 2's have been since February 2014, highlighting a significant period of intense work around issues.

There has been a sustained increase in concern around placement orders not being revoked within an appropriate timescale and these have been escalated through the process and are currently at DRP 2 being addressed via Service Managers.

The issues around PEPs and Health assessments continue to be around the same level from the year previously, however due to a delay in them being addressed this is also reflected in the increase in DRP stage 1's.

There has been an increase in concerns around care planning and statutory visits that has escalated.

There were no concerns raised for the 12 month period around delays in children being placed for adoption; the transfer of cases between workers or criminal injuries compensation.

New issues include addressing issues around identity, therapeutic provision, contact assessment and a rise in concern around the stability of placements.

#### **7.10 In-year activity of the Corporate Parenting Panel**

Corporate Parenting training takes place with elected members to remind them of their responsibilities.

The panel received regular voice and influence reports from the Looked after Children (LAC) Council. In addition to this the Lead Member, the Strategic Director and the Director of safeguarding, Children and Families met with members of the LAC council. Members of the LAC council attended the Board to discuss issues and share work they have done.

The Corporate Parenting group have received, discussed and considered the following reports and presentations:

- Post-16 achievement awards for looked after children

- The entitlements inquiry - APPG for looked after children and care leavers
- Self-assessment of adoption service against the Ofsted inspection framework
- Self-assessment of the fostering service against the Ofsted inspection framework
- Issues emerging from regulation 33 reports of children's homes
- Lac Strategy Statement
- Development of the sufficiency strategy for looked after children
- Leaving and After Care Service
- Office for Standards in Education Inspection Regime
- Education of looked after children
- National Adoption Week
- Rotherham Health Services - listening card for looked after children and young people
- Services for looked after children - quarterly performance reports
- Rotherham independent reviewing officer service
- Children missing from care
- Adoption and adoption panel annual report, and adoption research paper
- Care plans - analysis and action plan
- Fostering inspection report
- Ofsted inspections of children's homes
- Quality of residential placement providers
- Outcomes for care leavers in rotherham
- Education of looked after children
- stability of placements of looked after children (national indicator 63)
- The white rose consortium – independent residential framework
- Invest to save

#### **7.11 Next steps (2014/2015)**

- Finalise the LAC Strategy
- Put in place the Protocol between the Corporate Parenting Board and the RSCB
- Personal Education Plan improvements
- Voice of the Child
- Pupil Premium
- Regulation 33 Changes
- Internal Fostering Capacity
- Fostering Plus
- Fostering to Adopt

#### **8. Finance**

There are no financial issues associated with this report

#### **9. Risk and Uncertainties**

Corporate Parenting is a responsibility of the council and its elected members, it is important that officers and members understand their responsibilities.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

The new OFSTED inspection framework includes the progress of looked after children and care leavers and will examine the impact that the corporate parenting board has on looked after children and young people\*

## **11. Background and Consultation**

- OFSTED inspection for early help, children in need of protection, looked after children and care leavers
- Annual Report 2012/13