

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**  
**Tuesday, 21st October, 2014**

Present:- Councillor Beaumont(in the Chair); Councillors Doyle, J. Hamilton, Sharman and C. Vines.

Officers present: Rebecca Wall, Lynne Grice-Saddington, Sue Wilson, Mary-Ann Barton, Paul Dempsey and Paul Stinson (RMBC); Catherine Hall (NHS Rotherham) and Lorraine Lichfield (Head Teacher of the Virtual School).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Havenhand, Jane Parfremment and Adrian Hobson.

**D42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this meeting.

**D43. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 2ND JULY, 2014**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2014, were considered.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record.

**D44. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

There were no matters arising to report.

**D45. CARE LEAVERS' WEEK**

The Children's Services Manager reported that National Care Leavers' Week will take place during the schools' half-term holiday from Monday, 27th October to Friday, 30th October 2014, which would raise awareness amongst the public, professionals and politicians alike about the continuing needs of care leavers.

There was a range of activities and events on offer to young people in Rotherham during care leavers' week (some undertaken in partnership with other local authorities in the North of England) and included:-

- : participation in outwards bounds activities;
- : the 'new belongings' project, in partnership with other local authorities;
- : learning ways of integrating into universal services;
- : social events (attending a Rotherham United football match; taking part in a pool competition; activities at the Clifton Park museum; Halloween 'fright night' activities);
- : age appropriate activities (eg: preparation of and hosting a Sunday lunch).

Care leavers will also receive a 'moving on' tool kit, to help them adjust to independent living, including a portfolio of activities they must undertake when they are at the point to attending the 'moving on' housing panel (the portfolio is a way of creating their bank of evidence to present to the panel).

There are 176 young people leaving care this year (aged 16 to 21 years, although some may be as old as 25 years if they are in continuing education).

Agreed:- (a) That the report be received and the information be noted.

(b) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel, providing feedback on the activities of National Care Leavers' Week 2014 and including the comments of the young people taking part.

(c) That members of this Panel be provided with a diary of events which they may be able to attend during National Care Leavers' Week 2014.

#### **D46. HEADLINE FIGURE OF GCSE AND 'A' LEVEL RESULTS**

The Head Teacher of the Virtual School reported that the 2014 GCSE results had not yet been verified, nor had the results, nationally, been confirmed.

The Panel noted that, of the Department for Education cohort (looked after children who had been living in care for at least 12 months) an encouraging 15% of these Year 11 pupils had achieved 5 A\*-C subject grades at GCSE level. The results for pupils who had studied BTEC equivalent courses were still being verified.

Data for all key stages (albeit provision results currently) has been analysed and comparative data for national non-looked after children, Rotherham non-looked after children and Rotherham looked after children, has been produced. All data will be reported at the next Corporate Parenting Panel meeting as part of the Virtual School Head Teacher's Annual Report.

The regional comparative data is not yet available, although contact will be made with the head teachers of other Virtual Schools to obtain such data.

With regard to the other 85% of Year 11 pupils, data is not yet verified and it will be included in the report to be presented to the next meeting of this Panel.

The Panel noted that a small number of Rotherham's looked after children have completed AS Levels and are now continuing with their A2 (upper

sixth form) studies. There are also several of Rotherham's looked after children in further education, including a prospective Master's Degree student and a prospective PhD student.

A post-16 years awards evening, to acknowledge the educational achievements of Rotherham's looked after young people aged 16 years and over, is being planned (which The Mayor will attend) and is scheduled to take place on Thursday 4th December, 2014 at Rotherham Town Hall. Details are still to be confirmed and invitations will be sent out in due course.

Agreed:- (a) That the information be noted.

(b) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel containing the complete analysis of the 2014 GCSE and 'A' Level results.

#### **D47. PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1**

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Performance and Quality Manager, providing an update on the status of looked after children as at the end of June, 2014. The report also included various data shown in tabular format. The data within the report was for the first quarter 2014/15 and the previous period on the data table was the year end for 2013/14. Therefore, the numbers showed some considerable differences, because the comparison was between one quarter and one whole year. The information included details of:-

- : statistics of looked after children (who are either admitted in to care, or who are leaving care); all looked after children are assessed by a qualified social worker;
- : fostering placements, both within and outside the Rotherham Borough area;
- : commissioned fostering placements (including the costs of such placements);
- : health assessment of looked after children (including dental assessments);
- : recruitment of foster carers;
- : looked after children placed for adoption;
- : educational progress of looked after children (review of the quality of personal education plans for looked after children);
- : Ofsted ratings for Children's residential establishments;
- : care leavers and their progress;
- : children missing from care and ensuring that robust procedures are in place to deal with such cases (reference was made to the use of strategy meetings for children who may have been missing for 48 hours, or who may have been missing on three occasions in one month);
- : looked after children involved with the youth offending services;
- : 'voice of the child' - review meetings for looked after children and young people.

It was reported that Rotherham is due to take part in the annual Children's Commissioners National Survey, an electronic survey open to young people to participate from November 2014. Discussions are taking place with relevant teams to maximise engagement in completing the survey. The results of the survey will be published during March, 2015.

Panel members were informed of the Ofsted inspection regime for children's residential establishments. Inspections take place at intervals of six months and alternate so that each establishment has one full inspection annually, as well as a 'lighter touch' inspection undertaken annually. Reference was made to the implications of the continuing changes made to the Ofsted inspection framework, which sometimes produces inconsistency.

Agreed:- (a) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(b) That the Corporate Parenting Panel shall continue to receive reports about the actions taken in respect of children missing from care.

#### **D48. IRO SERVICE - YEAR END REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the acting Safeguarding Children Unit Manager, providing an overview of practice in relation to children looked after by the Council. The report highlighted the progress made during the period April 2013 to March 2014 within the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service in Children and Young People's Services, whilst also providing some examination of the challenges posed and recognising and planning around the areas for development. In addition, the report examined the achievements and successes in respect of the outcomes for Rotherham's children and young people. It was hoped that the report would also serve as a voice for Rotherham's looked after children and young people.

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), along with other Officers has a duty to fulfil the corporate parent role in respect of individual children. The role involves regular thorough review of the child's Care Plan, it means negotiating for best outcomes, at times challenging practice and decision making, operating in a timely way, working in partnership and solidly encouraging the participation of children and young people and those with legal parental responsibility for the child, as appropriate.

The report included details of:-

- : the purpose of the IRO Service and the legal context;
- : a profile of the IRO Service; staffing development, caseloads (Government guidance states 50 to 70 cases per social worker), training and development;
- : performance issues;
- : participation of children and young people; the importance of hearing the

- 'voice of the child';
- : advocacy for children and young people (and the use of independent visitors);
- : participation of parents, or those people who have parental responsibility;
- : complaints about the IRO Service;
- : conduct of the Local Authority in relation to children's cases (the Dispute Resolution Process policy, guidance and relevant forms will be provided for members of this Panel);
- : the permanent post dedicated to the independent review of foster carers;
- : achievements of the IRO Service since July 2013;
- : strengths of the IRO Service;
- : areas for future development within the action plan for the IRO Service.

Panel members noted that 90% of looked after children (aged 4 to 11 years) have stated that they are content with where they are living; this figure reduces to 77% in respect of children and young people aged 12 to 18 years.

Discussion took place on the following salient issues:-

- : ensuring that looked after children and young people are afforded the opportunity of writing their own views about the independent review process;
- : communication with children and young people (either via personal meetings, or the use of text messaging or 'facetime' or 'skype'); visits are undertaken by social workers to looked after children who live outside the Rotherham Borough area;
- : ensuring that care plans for looked after children are maintained and are used as part of the reviews;
- : the arrangements for review of both looked after children and carers;
- : there was reference to the actions taken in response to concerns about child sexual exploitation.

Agreed:- That the report be received and its contents noted.

#### **D49. UPDATE - LAC STRATEGY STATEMENT**

Further to Minute No. 11 of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 21st January, 2014, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Family Placements and Residential Service Manager, detailing the progress made on actions taken to implement the Looked After Children Strategy 2014 to 2017.

The priority objectives are:-

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, educations or training.

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.

The report included a copy of the updated Strategy document.

Panel members noted that a new process has been established which requires looked after children's Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to be reviewed and revised on a termly basis. Progress monitoring returns and the implementation of PEP short-term action plans will be linked to the allocation of the Pupil Premium. In addition, the use of 'live' electronic ePEPs is being considered. The Virtual School will be moving from a compulsory school age model to a birth to 18 years' model and will endeavour to develop further on that basis.

Discussion took place on the role and functions of the Looked After Children's Council.

Reference was made to the availability of employment opportunities for looked after young people who are care leavers, including those young people who have a disability. It was noted that there are sometimes suitable opportunities available within the Council and with the Council's partner organisations and other training providers (this matter would be discussed in detail with the Council's Director of Human Resources).

Agreed:- (a) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(b) That the progress made in implementing the various actions detailed in the Looked After Children Strategy 2014 to 2017, as detailed in the report now submitted, be noted.

**D50. SUFFICIENCY STATEMENT FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

Further to Minute No. 54 of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 12th March, 2014, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Family Placements and Residential Service Manager, providing an update on the progress the Council is making in implementing the strategic recommendations and achieving the goals identified in the Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children 2014 to 2017.

Specific reference was made to the progress made against the goals identified in the Strategy (as set out at Section 7.3 of the submitted report).

Discussion took place on:-

: the efforts being made to increase the number of children adopted from care and to recruit people to be adoptive parents;

: the assessment of a child's suitability for adoption and the importance of the child's permanence report;

: the use of the national adoption register;

: the requirements for prospective adoptive parents to undergo a medical assessment, as part of the application process.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the progress being made in implementing the recommendations of the Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children 2014 to 2017 and the progress made towards achieving the goals set out in the Strategy, as detailed in the report now submitted, be noted.

**D51. FOSTERING PLUS UPDATE - HOW THIS IS DEVELOPING**

The Corporate Parenting Panel noted that this item had been reported at item 50 above, during the update on the progress the Council is making in implementing the strategic recommendations and achieving the goals identified in the Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children 2014 to 2017.

**D52. IMPACT ON THE WHITE ROSE FRAMEWORK - FINANCIAL YEAR END REPORT**

Further to Minute No. 11 of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 21st May, 2013, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Commissioning Manager, stating that the White Rose Residential Framework is a consortium approach by twelve of the fifteen local

authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber Region to procure better value in independent residential placements for looked after children and young people.

The Panel noted that the current contract had begun in July 2013 and the submitted report outlined the impact the framework has had on Rotherham placements for looked after children in the financial year 2013/14. The financial savings achieved were detailed in the report.

From the beginning of the contract until 31st March, 2014, there had been 29 placements made (not including secure placements) with 25 of them made via the White Rose Framework. To date, only one placement of a young person had broken down. Panel members were informed of the very limited availability of secure accommodation nationally, the nearest unit being situated in the Sheffield area.

Agreed:- (a) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(b) That the achievements of the White Rose Residential Framework for residential placements for looked after children and young people, as detailed in the report now submitted, be welcomed.

(c) That further reports be submitted to future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel, on a regular basis, describing the progress of the contract for residential placements with the White Rose Residential Framework consortium.

#### **D53. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Agreed:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended (information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter).

#### **D54. INVEST TO SAVE - CHILDREN'S HOMES SAVINGS - PROPOSAL REPORT FOR SILVERWOOD**

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Family Placements and Residential Service Manager, which proposed an amendment to the remit of the Silverwood Residential Children's Home, East Herringthorpe, from caring for looked after young people on a short term and emergency basis to caring for looked after young people in long term placements.

It was noted that this 'invest to save' proposal would enable cost efficiencies to be achieved. The financial advantages of providing an alternative model for the provision of emergency placements for adolescents were contained within the report.

The review of occupancy rates has revealed that the Silverwood Home, on average, has had lower occupancy rates than all of the other residential homes operated by the Council.

Agreed:- (a) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(b) That the proposal to change the remit of the Silverwood Residential Children's Home, East Herringthorpe, from short term and emergency care to long term care, as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved insofar as the Corporate Parenting Panel is concerned.

(c) That, further to (b) above, the proposal to implement the change of remit with effect from April, 2015 be supported.

**D55. OPTIONS REPORT ON THE FUTURE ROLE OF LIBERTY HOUSE IN THE PROVISION OF SHORT BREAK CARE FOR DISABLED CHILDREN**

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Family Placements and Residential Service Manager, describing the different types of provision of short break care for disabled children, the role of Liberty House, Masbrough, as a short break care resource (for children with a disability) and the potential to achieve cost efficiencies from changing the way in which this Council provides short break care.

The report contained two options to consider in respect of the Council's future provision of short break care for children with a disability.

Panel members noted that, based on fees charged for mainstream placements, short break care for children with disabilities could be commissioned from the independent fostering agency sector.

Agreed:- (a) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(b) That the Corporate Parenting Panel supports Option A, as detailed in the report now submitted, which will result in a reduced capacity at Liberty House.

(c) That a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel detailing the progress in respect of the proposed changes at Liberty House and of the provision of short break care for children with a disability.

**D56. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel take place on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2015, starting at 9.30 a.m., in the Rotherham Town Hall.

