

# ITEM 4

Time commenced – 1:03pm  
Time finished – 3:09pm

## **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE Tuesday 30 October 2018**

Present: Councillor Williams (Chair)  
Councillors Ashburner (Vice Chair), Harwood, Hezelgrave,  
Hussain, Hudson and Russell

In attendance: One representative of the Children in Care Council  
Patrick Aherne – Participation Officer  
Jotinder Atwal – Exit from Care Manager  
Tracy Harrison – Derbyshire Constabulary  
Alex Hough – Democratic Services Manager  
Emma Humphrey – Commissioning Manager  
Annamarie Johannesson – Chair of Derby Foster Care  
Association  
Sally Penrose – Head of Fostering and Adoption  
Suanne Lim – Director of Children's Integrated Services  
Hazel Lymbery – Director of Early Help and Children's  
Safeguarding  
Maria Murphy – Chief Executive of Derby Homes  
Andy Smith – Strategic Director of People Services  
Catherine Young – Commissioning Manager

### **13/18 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Winter.

### **14/18 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair**

There were none.

### **15/18 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

### **16/18 Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

### **17/18 Children in Care Council – Update, October 2018**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of People Services providing an update on recent activity by the Children in Care Council (CICC). The report was presented to members by a representative of the CICC.

At their July meeting, the CICC discussed the Corporate Parenting Committee. It was reported that the young people found summaries detailed at the start of reports helpful to aid their understanding and also welcomed the thematic approach to meetings. It was also noted that the young people had requested an ice breaker to be held at the start of each meeting of the Committee.

It was reported that since the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee, the previous Children's Participation Officer had left to fulfil another role. One member of the CICC and three members of the Youth Council had helped interview for a replacement, with the newly recruited Participation Officer starting in post on 1 October 2018.

It was reported that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Strategic Director of People Services had attended the September meeting of the CICC. The CICC also discussed Local Area Coordination and the support that was offered to care leavers.

The Committee heard that Takeover Day was due to take place on 23 November 2018, which afforded children in care the opportunity to be involved in running local services. It was reported that events were planned throughout the month and that council departments, partner organisations and local businesses had been encouraged to participate.

Members welcomed Takeover Day and thanked the representative of the CICC for their update.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:**

- **To note the update from the Children in Care Council**
- **To identify opportunities for the participation of children in care as part of Takeover Day.**

## **18/18 Leaving Care Services – Update, October 2018**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of People Services providing an update on the Care Leavers Forum and development of the Local Offer to Care Leavers.

It was reported that the Care Leavers Forum had continued to experience low attendance; to address this, there had been a move away from traditional meetings to activity based events, which had proved more popular. For example, three young people recently participated in an overnight trip to the Beasley Back Dane Trust in the Peak District. It was reported that a timetable of monthly events had been scheduled based on young people's interests identified by Personal Advisors.

It was noted that as of 1 October 2018 there were 222 young people aged 16-25 who were considered to be Care Leavers, compared to 168 at the start of 2018. It was suggested that the development and implementation of the Local Offer and additional duties associated with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 had given rise to this increase, as more individuals accessed the support that was available.

It was reported that the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had pledged to host a regional event to support developing the employability of care leavers. This was part of a wider initiative to develop a core regional offer to Care Leavers across the LEP area.

Members welcomed the proposal and queried whether the service was working with local businesses to identify apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers. It was stated that both Derby City Council and Derbyshire Constabulary both employed care leavers as apprentices. Moreover, CV writing and interview skills were offered through the E4E service.

The Committee requested additional information in relation to the profile of care leavers, particularly with regards to their likely destination upon leaving care. It was agreed that additional information would be circulated subsequent to the meeting.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to note the update on the Leaving Care Service; consultation and engagement with care leavers and development of the Local Offer.**

## 19/18 Children's Placements Overview Report

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of People Services presenting an overview of the frameworks used for identifying children's placements. These were the East Midlands Regional Children's Framework, for fostering and children's homes; the Accommodation and Support Framework for 16 and 17 year olds, for semi-independent placements and support accommodation; and, the Nottinghamshire Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), for semi-independent placements for 16 and 17 year olds with complex needs.

The importance of ensuring safe and good quality accommodation for children in care through contracting provisions was emphasised. The Accommodation and Support Framework was discussed; it was reported that all referrals were made through the placements team, with all internal options explored before external fostering or residential providers were approached. The Framework was also used to procure beds in secure units, as well as mother/father and baby placements.

It was reported that significant quality assurance provisions were in place through the tender process; with OFSTED quality visits; references; and, contract management meetings. Members enquired as to whether providers would be removed from the framework as a result of poor OFSTED results; it was noted that each provider was assessed on a case by case basis.

The Committee sought further detail on semi-independent placements. It was reported that the Accommodation and Support Framework for 16 and 17 olds had been developed over time to include step-down provision. It was noted that a

bespoke pathway for semi-independent placements was being developed in partnership with Derby Homes.

Members were reassured by the quality assurance measures detailed in the report, but noted that 61.3 per cent of looked after children were placed outside the city. In this context, a recent decision to reduce the number of internal children's home spaces was questioned. It was reported that the number of internal bed placements had increased as a result of additional supported living places; moreover, it was noted that Council Cabinet would be reviewing the reconfiguration process on a regular basis.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:**

- **To note the report.**
- **To request that data relating to the numbers of children in external fostering placements; external children's home placements; external semi-independent placements; and, secure welfare placements were circulated to members on a quarterly basis.**

## **20/18      Update on the East Midlands Regional Children's Framework and External Care providers**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of People Services in relation to the East Midlands Regional Children's Framework, detailing work that had been undertaken with providers to support local placements and sufficiency.

It was reported that the Framework had been in place since 2016 and had been implemented in partnership with other regional local authorities, securing stabilisation and sustainability for difficult to place looked after children. The Committee queried the level of success with placing sibling groups. It was reported that although challenging, this was facilitated where possible.

The Committee noted a modest increase in children in care between 2017-18 and 2018-19, but a substantial increase in costs. It was reported that an increase in the number of welfare beds, the costs of which could not be capped, had contributed to the overall increase in costs.

Members questioned whether there were a higher number of looked after children with complex needs. It was noted that the council maintained a strong early help offer and maintained support to voluntary organisations that support families. It was further reported that the Social Impact Bond would be in place for four years from January 2019 to support children at the edge of care.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to note the report.**

## **21/18      Inspection, Monitoring and Development of Children's Homes**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Communities and Place with regards to the Inspection, Monitoring and Development of Children's Homes. The report detailed OFSTED outcomes, regulation 44 visits and plans for member visits.

It was noted that since the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee there had been one visit by OFSTED to Home E. As a result of a full inspection on 4 and 5 September 2018, the home had improved from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires Improvement'. Three further homes were reported as requiring improvement; two were considered 'Good' and one 'Outstanding'.

The planned two phase approach to the reconfiguration of Children's Homes was discussed, with the council working closely with external partners including Derbyshire Constabulary and Derby Homes. It was reported that an extensive refurbishment had recently been completed at Home C, with residents having been involved in choosing furnishings and colour schemes.

A representative of the Children in Care Council asked how the young people had been affected by changes and closures. It was reported that all changes were carefully planned and that a range of support was provided via managers and key workers.

The Committee sought clarification on recent management changes within the service. It was reported that acting up arrangements were currently in place and that further detail would be circulated to members.

The Committee welcomed the involvement of Derby Homes in phase two of the reconfiguration but some members expressed concern at lack of capacity in children's homes. The need to bring more young people back to internal provision was emphasised and members suggested that any surplus capacity could be sold to other local authorities.

In reference to supported living, members enquired to what extent housing benefit payments could be utilised to meet costs. The Committee heard details of how the Housing Revenue Account could be utilised to meet General Fund costs for accommodating young people. It was noted that Derby Homes were seeking to acquire appropriate properties on the open market for this purpose.

The Chair stated that as Cabinet Member for Children and Young People they would be inviting councillors to attend training in order to facilitate children's home visits. Moreover, it was re-emphasised that the re-configuration of children's homes would be reviewed by Council Cabinet.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to note the report.**

## **22/18      Exit from Care – Overview**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of People Services providing an update on the Exit from Care Team since its establishment in 2013.

The report detailed the support provided to ensure children in care were placed with family members where possible. It was noted that in 2017/18 the team had supported 34 children to exit regulated care settings, which had resulted in a saving of £2.6 million to the council.

The structure of the Exit from Care team was detailed to the Committee and information on the specialist work undertaken to review long-term placements was discussed. Members welcomed both the positive outcomes and significant value for money the service offered.

Further to a question from a representative of the Children in Care Council, it was stressed that the voice of the child was paramount in any decisions made about their care.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to note the progress of the Exit from Care Team since its formation in 2013.**

## **23/18      Fostering Agency Report**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of People Services presenting an updated Fostering Service Statement of Purpose and Marketing Plan.

The report detailed measures to monitor and manage the outcomes of the fostering service; assessed the overall experience and ability of panel members; the appropriateness of placements; commitment to safeguarding and diversity; and, areas of practice that influence how effectively the panel could function.

Measures to improve the recruitment of foster carers were discussed. It was reported that since April 2018, eleven fostering households had been approved, four as mainstream and seven as family and friends carers. De-registrations were also considered; in 2017/18 there had been 18 de-registrations, ten of which were due to retirement. It was further noted that the adoption of children by fostering families was increasingly prevalent and although it resulted in a positive outcome for the child, it would often result in a family stepping down from being foster carers.

It was reported that Fostering Allowances were reviewed annually and that the service was in regular contact with the Foster Care Association to inform ideas for the development of the service. It was further noted that a £1,000 refer a friend bonus was currently being offered as an incentive to existing foster carers.

The Committee welcomed the report but requested that changes to the Statement of Purpose from the previous version were clearly detailed. Moreover, members heard evidence of the number of enquiries received by the service and what proportion progressed to receiving information packs and initial home visits. Members also sought further information on Shared Lives Placements and the long-term direction of the service. It was reported that a consultation on proposals would begin on 7 November.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to endorse the Fostering Agency report and Marketing Plan.**

## 24/18      Adoption Agency Report 2017-18

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of People Services detailing performance information for the adoption service between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018.

Scorecard data was detailed in the report, including the profile of children adopted from care and the average number of days taken from children entering care to being placed for adoption. It was reported that there had been 24 adoptions from care in 2017/18 and 130 over a three year period. Moreover, the three year average timescale for adoption was significantly above the government threshold of 426 days at 653 days, but had reduced significantly to 474 days for 2017-18 alone. It was reported that the service was working closely at D2N2 level to expand the available pool of adopters in order to further reduce this figure.

The Committee queried how Government thresholds were set. Timeliness was considered an important factor, however the importance of permanency was also emphasised. Low levels of placement breakdown were cited as evidence that this was being achieved in Derby. Members queried how best practice was being assessed. It was reported that liaison with colleagues at other authorities and external bodies such as the Local Government Association was commonplace. It was noted that an important assessment criteria was whether adoption was being considered for all children who would benefit from it; it was stated that evidence suggested this was the case in Derby.

The Committee welcomed measures to expand the available pool of adopters. It was requested that data for Derby City Council continued to be reported in order to compare to the overall effectiveness of the Regional Adoption Agency.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to endorse the Adoption Agency Report 2017-18.**

MINUTES END