

Time commenced 1:00pm

Time finished 3:10pm

## **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE**

### **Tuesday 20 February 2024**

Present: Councillors Whitby (Chair), Ashby, Hezelgrave, Mulhall and Roulstone

In attendance: Alisha Ahmed, Deputy Youth Mayor Elect  
Pervez Akhtar, Corporate Parenting Lead,  
Childrens Partnership,  
Laura Bradley, CiC Council, Participation Officer  
Kelly Buswell Programme Manager  
Betty Carter, Chair of Parent Foster Carers  
Graeme Ferguson, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Looked After Children  
Joanne Groombridge, Childrens Rights Service (CGL)  
Harman Kaur, Deputy Youth Mayor  
Muhammad Muntasir, Youth Mayor  
Maria Murphy, Director of Derby Homes  
Kelly Ormond, Deputy Head of Service Early Help  
Heather Peet, Designated Nurse CiC NHS  
Paul Simpson CEX Derby City Council  
Nicola Smith, Assistant Director of Children's Strategic Commissioning Derby & Derbyshire ICB  
Andy Smith, Strategic Director Peoples Services  
Steven Stockley, Registered Service Manager Early Help  
Sam Thiruvathilil Youth Mayor Elect

### **21/23 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Lonsdale, Steve Atkinson, Independent Chair Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help & Children's Social Care, Ranjit Dol, Derbyshire Police

### **22/23 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair**

There were none.

### **23/23 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Whitby declared he was a Foster Carer for Derby City Council.  
Cllr Roulstone declared she was employed in a Derby school.

### **24/23 Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

### **25/23 Children in Care Council (CiCC) Update**

The Committee received a report from the Director of Early Help and Social Care. The report was presented by the CiC Participation Officer (PO). The report provided a summary

of participation activities over the last quarter, to ensure the committee were sighted on activities and enabling direction to be set where needed.

The report highlighted the work Our Voice, Our Success (CiCC) had done, what was important to them and how they impacted on services. The challenges for CiC were explained to the Corporate Parenting Committee as they may be able to help.

There were three meetings of the Our Voice, Our Success Group (OvOs) since October 2023.

**The November meeting**, the venue was the Quad Derby. The results from the Pledge Poll were shared. The Pledge document was also discussed at the meeting. The YP were concerned about the overall look and design of the document as it did not resemble a document produced by them; it was not worded in a child friendly way and some of the points were not understood by the young people. The PO would liaise with the appropriate service about amending the wording and the January meeting will focus on the design of the document.

The Strategic Director of People's Services attended the meeting to discuss the National Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) Group. It was highlighted there would be a National Conference in July 2024 to which young people from the CiCC were invited to give a message of their choice to the national audience. It was decided to discuss the "Breaking the Stigma" project which was being focussed on in 2024.

**The December Christmas Get Together** – this was a thank you event for young people who had committed their time and to promote relationship building in the group. The event took place at Megazone Derby.

**Christmas Card Competition** – The PO facilitated the Annual CiC Christmas Card competition with help from the Communications and Marketing Team. The winning artwork was used on the Christmas Card from the Strategic Director of Children's Services and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care.

**Budget Consultation**, young people explored topic areas in the consultation which included SEND Services, Home to School Transport, Adult Social Care and Libraries and Leisure Services. The YP were asked which areas of the proposals they agreed or disagreed with and for thoughts and suggestions.

**School Cluster Groups**, the first session of the School Participation meeting was held at Woodlands School on 17<sup>th</sup> October, it went well. All secondary age CiC were invited to attend with their school. Four schools attended. The session focused on School Nurses and enabled YP to have their say on training developed for School Nurses by the University of Derby.

At the next session the Breaking the Stigma project would be discussed. The aim of the project was breaking the stigma of how children and young people in care are seen by others. The young people would be able to speak about the comments and feedback they have as CiC. A film had been created with young people sharing their thoughts which would be shown at the "Virtual School Festival" as well as the National ADCS Conference.

**Residential Participation**, the PO continued to liaise with colleagues to develop appropriate methods of consultation with a flexible approach. An informal approach to visiting homes was adopted to ensure young people feel comfortable. This was received positively, and relationships were being built with young people.

**Room for Change Poll**, at the October meeting the Committee had asked the PO to explore the option of groups with differing age ranges. The PO talked to young people in meetings held and individually. These young people, whose ages ranged from 11 to 16, said that they

would not like to split the group into two age categories. To ensure the collection of a wide range of views the PO has launched a poll to all CiC aged 10 or over. The findings will be reported in the Quarter 4 report.

**Care Leavers Update**, The PO worked with the Personal Adviser/Staying Close Lead with the Leaving Care Team to support participation with Care Leavers as necessary. The PO role was to provide support for Participation Evidence.

The committee asked about attendance of CiC at the November meeting and were informed that it was low. However, take up was higher on the Pledge Poll, as young people prefer communication using mobile phones etc. There are other different types of meetings like the school cluster groups. An officer highlighted that young people communicate in different ways and there was a need for DCC to be more dynamic and agile in communicating with young people. The narrative needed to be right and perhaps a re-definition of what was meant by CiC Council was needed.

A councillor asked if the film that young people made for the “Breaking the Stigma” project could be shared with the Committee, the officer agreed to share it with the Committee.

**The Committee noted the report and feedback from Children in Care Council**

## 26/23 Annual Report of the Virtual Head for Children Looked After (CLA) 2022-23

The Committee received a report from the Strategy Director of Peoples Services. The report provided the Committee with the academic outcomes of pupils in the Virtual School for the school year 2022-23. It detailed the key education performance measures for CLA, the key successes and areas of development for the Virtual School and celebrated the progress and achievements of the young people.

The educational outcomes in 2023 are the second published since the pandemic. As with previous Virtual School Head teacher reports, caution should be used in reading. The outcomes should be celebrated but there are group variation factors which need to be understood as well as the impact on learning of the pandemic.

The committee noted that due to a DfE announcement, this will be the last year that KS1 SATs tests will need to be administered by schools.

The key points to note were:

- Reception Good Level of Development was well below national
- Year 1 Phonics outcomes above national
- Key Stage 1 outcomes slightly below national for reading, writing and maths but the combined RWM was broadly in line.
- Key Stage 2 attainment in combined reading, writing and maths in line with national.
- Key Stage 2 progress above national for the third year running in reading, writing and maths.
- Key Stage 4 GCSE Attainment 8 score below national – the profile of Y11 CLA should be noted of the 37 pupils, 29 have identified SEND needs (78%) compared to 63% of the national cohort with SEND needs.
- Key Stage 4 GCSE Progress 8 score slightly above national

The committee heard about the Attendance and Exclusions of pupils in the Virtual School 2022-23 and noted the key points:

- Overall absence, authorised absence, unauthorised absence, and persistent absentees are all better than national figures.

- Fixed term exclusions (suspensions) are higher than national figures.
- There were no permanent exclusions.

Regarding Personal Education Plans for Pupils (PEPS) the committee heard that it was a statutory duty of the local authority to maintain PEPs for every LAC up to the age of 18. A LAC must have a PEP written within 20 school days of coming into care and a PEP must be reviewed 3 times a year. In Derby the completion rate was approximately 14.31 days for a fully signed off PEP, this was 3.5 days quicker than in 2021-22.

The officer described the Virtual School funding which came mainly from the Pupil Premium Plus grant from the DfE (£2,410 per child). There were four further grants allocated from the DfE. Two grants are for the duties of the Virtual school in relation to previous LAC and for extended duties for all children with a social worker. Two more grants were allocated to help with Covid recovery; the Recovery Premium and the School Led Tutoring Grant.

There are also Virtual School work streams supporting improved outcomes. These included bespoke provision for LAC in children's homes, creative mentoring, mentoring for disengaged CLA, Speech and language support for those with poor literacy skills, encouraging reading, Storytime magazine, educational provision for pupils with no school place cookery school, sewing club. New support for pupils in 2022-23 included Apprentice teaching assistants, Nature explorers and a Virtual Schools Festival.

In June 2021 the DfE gave Virtual Schools a strategic responsibility to improve attendance and outcomes for all children with a social worker. The Virtual School has undertaken work with the Inclusion Partnership in the City to raise the profile of all children with a social worker, they also worked with Education Welfare to encourage the attendance of Children in Need or on Child Protection Plans and encouraged schools to look at having relational behavioural management approaches.

The Priorities for 2023-24 were described and included, continuing with targeted support activity for pupils to improve educational outcomes, in particular maths and GCSE outcomes. Develop city wide CPD courses, continue to work towards the vision that Derby becomes an "Attachment and Trauma Informed city with rollout of eLearning training packages to all staff working with CYP across the city.

The committee were interested in the number of CLA children being educated outside of Derby, (63%), in 47 different local authorities, was this a similar situation in other local authorities. The officer explained that as a small unitary authority Derby sends a greater percentage of children outside of Derby, unlike larger County Councils who would probably have no CLA out of their area. A councillor highlighted that some CLA would have Care Placements outside of Derby also. The officer explained this would in part be due to the sufficiency of Foster Carers, but other CLA could have been placed further afield for safeguarding reasons.

A Committee member queried the reason for the fall in achievement in KS1 since 2018 for reading, writing and maths, how much effect did COVID have and how could this be improved. The officer explained that attainment was higher during 2018/19 as there was a lower percentage of SEND in the 2018 cohort than in 2023 where the percentage was 71%. Another member noted that Year 1 Phonics outcomes had been above national figures for the 4<sup>th</sup> year running. It was clear that the Virtual School was working well with timely interventions. The officer explained that SMART targets were used with young people, the school identified where more help for individual CLA pupils was needed, giving them opportunities for better attainment.

The data provided was noted by the Committee and it was suggested that most of Derby's population would not have knowledge of the work of the Virtual School and how it helped to raise the level of attainment for individual young people. A lot of funding and support was being provided to achieve amazing outcomes. What was being done to put this information

into the public arena. It was highlighted that DCC had received an “Outstanding” grade for Childrens Social Care from a recent Ofsted Inspection.

A councillor was interested in the funding for the Virtual School, the majority of which came from the Pupil Premium Plus grant from the DfE, and if there was a breakdown available. One figure of interest in the report was £24,000 to Amazon. The officer explained this was an initiative to encourage reading, £40 three times a year was allocated to each CLA. The funding allowed young people to choose books and other educational resources which are sent direct to their home. The councillor then highlighted the figure for Education Psychology £15,000 which she felt to be low, it should be higher as it was important to assess children as soon as possible. The officer explained that it was the school’s responsibility to commission Educational Psychologists. The money identified in the breakdown was allocated to the Ed Psych service by the Virtual School to enable work in schools.

One external committee member representing the Derby & Derbyshire ICB responsible for the “Start Well” initiative had noted the percentage of primary school SEND children in the city and asked to work collaboratively with the Virtual School Headteacher.

The committee was asked if the Virtual School work could be recognised, be built on, made more visible, and the partnership working be recognised.

#### **The Committee resolved:**

- 1. To recognise the educational achievement of Derby’s children who are looked after.**
- 2. To support the areas for development as highlighted within the report.**
- 3. That the successes of the virtual school should be celebrated, they supported exploring ways of disseminating the good news of the work that the Virtual School does for our Children Looked After.**
- 4. Educational Psychologists for CLA should be a priority, all CLA children should be assessed as early as possible.**

## **27/23 Update report on Children in Care Missing**

The Committee received the Annual report and presentation of the Director of Early Help and Childrens Social Care. The report was presented by the Deputy Head of Service Early Help. The report gave an overview of the current performance and actions implemented to support improved outcomes for those Looked After Children who go missing.

The officer reported that the Early Help Service had strategic responsibility in the council to manage and report the regular monitoring of children and young people who go missing.

The Committee were informed that the missing protocol in partnership with Derbyshire Children’s Service and Derbyshire Constabulary was updated in April 2023. Bi-quarterly strategic meetings had continued over the last 12 months. The meeting has a wide and diverse membership from both internal and external partners. The officer highlighted the progress of the Missing Protocol since the last Corporate Parenting meeting.

The officer reported on the “Looked After Missing Data”. Between January to December 2023: There were 1562 missing episodes in total for Derby City Council CYP. Of the 1562, there were 525 missing episodes for 74 CLA. The previous year the number of CLA reported missing was higher there were 646 missing episodes and a total of 86 CLA. Currently there are 3 UASC’s who are deemed to be long-term missing, they are being monitored through the missing protocol with oversight from the Head of Service in the CiC Team.

Males between the age of 13 to 17 years are the highest number of individuals reported as missing with a total of 310 out of 525. There was a spike for all genders at the age of 16 which totalled 167 missing episodes and 26 young people. There was a low number of transgender cyp missing episodes but there was a need to look at the reporting and how data was recorded.

Patterns of Missing Episodes - Of the 525 missing episodes, there are 33 young people who are reported as being persistently missing (3 or more times each) with 452 episodes.

Young people who are regularly missing are supported by a several mechanisms and the missing protocol and processes are implemented. Missing episodes are reviewed using individual support meetings and multi-agency monthly missing monitoring meeting analysis. Attempts are made to keep young people safe through disruption and safety plans. For many missing episodes, the time a young person was missing was 0-12 hours.

The top ten persistently missing children who are CLA for January to December 2023 were highlighted. Many of them now have fewer missing episodes, and some are no longer reported as missing. Many of the persistent missing episodes are from a small group placed in DCC residential homes. However, the residential staff have built strong relationships with these young people and understand their needs. The main reason for children going missing was to have contact with family and friends.

The locations where a young person had been whilst missing and when found were recorded. They were: Derbion, River Gardens, Bus Stations, Parks, and Private addresses, where it was thought parties were taking place. These places are highlighted in the monthly monitoring meetings and raised at police led high risk exploitation and missing meetings. Referrals and resources are used from the youth alliance, community safety partnership and other organisations to support in disrupting these areas.

Return Interviews – As part of the updating of the return interview and the review of the missing protocol DCC reported on the amount of return interviews offered, accepted, or declined. However, if there are safeguarding concerns a return interview must be completed. Of the 525 missing episodes 56 are unknown this was due to the allocated worker not completing the return interviews on the system. Of the 459 interviews offered, 357 were accepted and 174 were declined. Of the 357 accepted 351 were completed in the 72 hours timescale. The 52 that appear out of timescales were often due to the young person being reported missing again.

Exploitation Risk and Missing – out of the 351 return interviews completed, the majority of CLA appear to present as a low risk when missing, this supported the reason for CLA who go missing was to see their family.

The officer highlighted the challenges of the service:

- CLA who go missing often have severe and complex needs. Many go through several placements for different reasons, but at times placement sufficiency can be an issue and can affect on missing episodes.
- There was a national trend around placement sufficiency.
- In this reporting period CLA who were persistently missing often went missing as a group. The complexities of the individuals meant it took time to build relationships and understand the peer group, leading to a high number of missing episodes.

Future steps were described and included an audit of return interviews and disruption plans following the implementation of the new Return Interview and good practice standards of holding a missing intervention meeting with a focus on disruption.

A Committee member asked if the turnover of staff in Residential Homes had improved. It was confirmed that there were still significant challenges around recruitment and retention of

staff. This had an impact on the consistency of key workers and affected the stability of children and young people in Residential Homes.

Another member asked about younger children and missing episodes, there seemed to be fewer going missing, but they are more vulnerable. It was explained that every missing episode would have a Return Interview, to understand why the child or young person had gone missing. If they were persistently going missing, then individual support meetings would be held and possibly more resources would be supplied. It was highlighted that of the 525 missing episodes 350 of them were because of relationships CLA wanted to have contact with friends and families.

A committee member asked for clarification on the levels of risk. The officer explained that where there was a level of high and medium risk, the young people were often being supported for risks of exploitation. However, the majority of CLA are deemed to be low risk when missing, the main reason for going missing was to see family.

The committee were interested to know the level of resources used by agencies to get young people back safely. It was explained that for a short period (0-12 hours) young people often return of their own accord, either through hunger or cold, but if it was a young person with a high risk of exploitation then police resources would be used. It was suggested that public awareness of the challenges around children's social care was low. A lot of staff hours of the service and local partnerships were being used to ensure that these young people had a stable life.

A councillor queried the length of time of missing episodes and asked if there was a minimum and maximum time allowed to before being reported as missing. The officer explained that each case was individual and depended on the young persons Care Plan, in some cases they could go for a whole day whilst others would be reported missing within 10 minutes.

The Committee felt the report had provided a lot of assurance to them and it was good to see the ongoing forward planning which would enhance future work.

- 1. The Committee noted the report.**
- 2. The Committee agreed that the whole team and Service Director should be thanked for the caring work they do each day, and that the work of other partnerships involved including the Police, staff from Derby City Council, staff at the local Bus Station, and the Youth Alliance should be recognised as well.**

## **28/23 Supported Accommodation Staying Close Programme Update January 2024**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care which was presented by the Registered Service Manager Early Help. The report provided an update to the Committee of progress and registration of the Staying Close Programme within Supported Accommodation and outlined the current position, priorities, and emerging themes.

The officer explained that "Staying Close" was a model which provided an enhanced support package for young people leaving care from Children's Homes. It provided an offer of move-on accommodation with a package of practical and emotional support given by members of DCC staff in the Children in Care and Leaving In Care Services.

A review of in-house residential services was undertaken, it was realised that 6 transition properties would help the success of the Staying Close project, the properties would be used for residential care experienced young people to live in. Funding was secured from the DfE

for the Staying Close projection spanning from April 2023 to March 2025, it had been confirmed that any underspend within the 2 years could be carried over after March 2025.

The six transition homes were registered as Supported Accommodation properties in the programme on the government portal. Since the registration a further three properties had been identified. A partnership was in place with Derby Homes to identify and refurbish additional suitable properties as supported accommodation for the programme up to a total of ten.

Funding for staffing to support the delivery of the programme was obtained through the grant award for Staying Close funding from the DfE. Staffing included 2 Transitional Workers, but only 1 has been appointed, and the appointment of a part-time trauma practice informed Social Worker.

Risks to the programme were highlighted and included young people who had passed their independent living assessments but were not fully ready for independence taking their own tenancy. The Staying Close programme was non-enforceable on young people who have the right to make their own decisions. Some young people may choose to take up their own tenancy without recognising the need for support. Adverse outcomes they could experience included Housing instability, financial challenges social isolation, mental health concerns and vulnerability to exploitation. However, by engaging in the programme the expected positive outcomes were, stability and continuity, education and employment opportunities, mental health and wellbeing, community integration and financial stability.

The officer highlighted some of the challenges experienced such as delays in registration confirmation, payment processing and unexpected funding issues which had affected the timeline for staff appointments. The challenges were overcome by collaboration with external providers, which demonstrated the resilience and adaptability of the project team.

The team was now focusing on upcoming milestones like staff appointment, learning and training plans and the assessment model for young people's independent living skills. Efforts would be made to secure sustainability for the programme after 2025.

The officer was thanked for a good report. The committee asked when a young person joined the supportive programme they knew it was time limited. The officer explained that young people knew it was an interim arrangement. The goals and focus were jointly discussed with the young person and were reviewed in 12 months to see if they were ready to move into an independent tenancy, or other solution. Young people accepted into the programme when moving into their flat/house can decorate it as they wish, and choose furniture, which they will be able to keep.

It was explained all properties are registered as solo accommodation, but there were 2 properties with two bedrooms, the second room could be used for creative or workspace. The councillor asked if there would be enough properties going forward. It was explained that the programme would run alongside USAC and other programmes. There was funding available to purchase accommodation, but the challenge was sourcing 1-bedroom properties in the city. In the long-term it was hoped to save money by reducing placements in out of area residential units. However, this project should not be looked solely on a financial basis.

The Committee felt the project had a great potential to reduce the number of care leavers who become "Not in Education, Employment or Training" (NEETs). Although these young people are not quite ready for Adult Learning it might be possible to get some information and work with the service so they learn what was on offer and think about what they might be interested in.

A Councillor asked about the quantity and locations of properties. The officer confirmed that in total there would be 10 properties. Currently there were 9, 7 of these had tenants, 1 was being refurbished and 1 was in a conveyancing process.

Regarding location, all properties were within 5 to 10 minutes from Derby, on main bus routes, and in areas where services are in place and with easy access to the city centre. The Committee were assured that all the properties had been visited to check they were suitable for young people to live in. The areas had been assessed in terms of crime levels. The service had worked alongside Derby Homes. The registration process was described. Properties must be registered with Ofsted who undertake an assessment to check that properties are up to the expected standard and a robust process was in place for any other properties bought.

The Councillor asked about engagement with the neighbours and establishing good relations. It was explained that officers liaised with people in neighbouring properties and gave out contact details in case there are issues, such as anti-social behaviour.

The breakdown of costs on accommodation was queried by the Committee. There was £10,000 available for 2023/24 with an estimated allocation of £2,000 per property this would cover only 5 properties. It was explained that some properties already have a good level of decoration, and some might need just a bit of refurbishment. The accommodation funding was not used to pay for utilities, some additional funding was available also.

The Committee asked about the Referral process for young people. It was explained that the Registered Service Manager works with the Deputy Head of Service to identify a pipeline of prospective young people that would benefit from the programme. These young people are discussed with the Children in Care Services managers, Leaving Care managers, Social Workers, and Personal Advisors regarding referral to the programme. Currently there are only 10 properties, the programme was now in the proof-of-concept stage, if successful it was hoped to move forward with the programme.

The Committee thanked the officer for the report.

**The Committee considered and noted the content of the report and thanked the officer for his work.**

## 29/23 Children's Rights Service Annual Report

The Committee agreed to defer the report to the April meeting.

MINUTES END