

# ITEM 04

Time commenced 1.00pm  
Time finished 2.30pm

## **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE** **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

Present: Councillor Williams (Chair)  
Councillors Hussain, McCristal and A Pegg,

In attendance: Pervez Akhtar, Corporate Parenting Lead  
Stephen Atkinson, Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire  
Safeguarding Partnership  
Johanna Barker, Team Manager CiC  
Katie Evans, Commissioning Manager CiC  
Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care  
Graeme Ferguson, Headteacher of the Virtual School for  
Looked After Children  
Anthony Mains, Leaving Care Service Manager  
Heather Peet, Designated Nurse  
Lorraine Smith, Commissioning Manager - Early Help and  
Priority Families  
Connie Spencer, Youth Mayor

### **31/20 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Judy Levitt, Team Manager Early Help and Children's Safeguarding, Lisa Melrose, Head of Integrated Commissioning (Children & Young People), Stephen Johnson, Derbyshire Police Marlene Upchurch, Chair of Foster Care Association, Andy Smith, Strategic Director People's Services

### **32/20 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair**

There were none.

### **33/20 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

### **34/20 Minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### **35/20 Children in Care Council – Update**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning which provided an update on recent activity by the Children in Care Council (CiCC). The report was presented to members by the Commissioning Manager.

The Committee noted that, since the last report, there had been one meeting of the CiCC, which took place in March 2021. At that meeting the Commissioning Manager spoke to the group about the recruitment of the new Participation Officer and thanked one of the CiC members for joining the recruitment panel. Discussion also took place about which guest speakers the current members would like to see at future meetings.

The Committee were informed that in-house Children's Homes are now able to help young people to virtually join CICC meetings. The new Participation Officer would liaise with the Homes to ensure new members would be present at the next CICC meeting.

The officer highlighted that a consultation to capture the views of children in care and care leavers during lockdown was distributed in February 2021. It was circulated to Internal and External Foster Carers, Derby City Council Children's Homes, Care Leavers, supported accommodation providers and young people remanded in custody. As there was little take up the deadline had been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, and an update on the results would be provided at the next Corporate Parenting Committee.

The Chair of the Committee thanked the officer for the update, and extended a welcome to the new Participation Officer who she looked forward to meeting, and to the young people returning to the Committee to give their views. Regarding the consultation the Chair suggested that research into how young people would like to be consulted as IT develops rapidly different methods of engagement they might like to use.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:**

- 1. To consider the content of the report and feedback from CiCC and engagement with care leavers**

## **36/20      Report on the Work of the Virtual School for Looked After Children (LAC)**

The Board considered a report of the Director of Learning, Inclusion and Skills which was presented by the Virtual School Headteacher.

The officer informed the Board that the exams and assessments in 2019/20 were cancelled due to the pandemic, so the usual content of the Virtual School report could not be produced as there were no outcomes to report on. This report gave an overview of the areas of work undertaken by the Virtual School to help support looked after children (LAC).

The officer explained that the Local Authorities have a statutory duty under Section 22 (3A) of the Children Action 1989 to promote the educational achievement of LAC. There are three core functions to the role of the Virtual School which are; to monitor and track the educational progress and achievement of all looked after children in the care of Derby City Council; to support and challenge schools, settings and other professionals where provision is not good enough; to promote inclusion and equality of access including raising attendance and reducing exclusions.

The Virtual School works in partnership with a network of professionals both within and outside of the Virtual School team, and a range of commissioned staff with specific expertise. The team works alongside schools, social care professionals and carers to ensure vulnerable children can access education and support.

The officer detailed the structure of the team which comprised of the headteacher, five specialist education officers and two administrative staff, one of whom was an apprentice. The officer explained that a range of other staff are commissioned to offer support to LAC, including Educational Psychologists, Mentors, Teaching staff and Teaching Assistant Staff. Each Virtual School Specialist Education Officer has their own caseload of LAC which are aligned to the social care teams across the City.

Specific activities to support LAC were described by the officer, these included:

- Targeted one to one support for Year six pupils who are working just below the national expectation; there were 8 pupils in this category who had been offered additional teaching support to improve their outcomes.
- Bespoke provision for LAC in Children's Homes; two members of staff from Kingsmead School had been commissioned to work on promoting educational provision for young people in Derby Children's Homes.
- Mentoring support for the most challenging of young people who are furthest from accessing mainstream education. The Virtual School was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a 3-year contract working with Enthusiasm. The Chair asked whether the contract would be extended. The officer confirmed that work was ongoing with procurement; it was hoped to have a specification in place for the next programme by April so that a new programme could start in September 2021.
- Creative mentoring, any LAC young people who have a creative interest which they want to develop or need confidence building, are offered access to a six-week block of mentoring support. The scheme was created in conjunction with creative industries in Derby (Arts/Music/Theatre). The Chair was aware of a creative hub in Derby City which had been piloted and was interested in more information about their success. The Youth Mayor felt that the creative work had been valued by young people; it was agreed to discuss further outside the meeting.
- Speech and Language Support for young people with poor literacy skills, The Team has commissioned specialist teachers to work intensively with these children to improve their literacy skills
- the Virtual School commissions Educational Psychology Support (EPS), to provide support to the professionals working with young people, mainly focused on the support and supervision needed for the team working with the young person.
- Seguridad, which was a bespoke and in-depth piece of work commissioned from an organisation called Touchbase, to support one young person in a Derby City Children's Home. A fact file was created of that young person's life which identified that they had experienced 48 traumatic experiences in

their life by the age of 14 years. This research led to a change of approach in supporting the young person's behaviour.

- Encouraging Reading; the Virtual School over the past two years had sent out reading book vouchers to be spent in bookshops. During lockdown they worked with procurement colleagues to arrange for carers to request books from Amazon for the children and these were sent directly to the homes of the children. This was well received by carers and had an additional benefit of the Virtual School being able to see what books were being purchased. The Chair was pleased that the offer had been changed and adapted so that LAC were still able to obtain books to read in lockdown, she asked that her thanks be extended to the team.
- Educational Provision for pupils who do not have a school place, either because they have had a "move of care placement" to a different area, or because of an EHCP being put in place, which means a statutory consultation process needs to be followed; the Virtual School will commission a 1 to 1 tutor to provide learning for a pupil until a school place is found.
- A Cookery School, each half term the Virtual School organises a "cookery school" in conjunction with the YMCA. These days have a theme and give the young people confidence and the life skills in being able to cook some great dishes.

The officer explained that the Virtual School was allocated £2345 pupil premium plus (PP+) funding per pupil to support improving educational outcomes. The Virtual School has a Pupil Premium Plus Policy which details activities supported with the additional money. Allocations are given to schools via the targets set in a child's Personal Education Plan (PEP); this provides a record of how professionals around LAC support that child's educational outcomes and achievements. In Derby there is an electronic version of the PEP which has been in place for four years. There is a section on the PEP for the young person to complete. During Lockdown 1 a shorter version of the PEP was provided. PEPs were completed virtually throughout the pandemic which saved travel time for staff; ninety five percent were completed within a month of their due date. The Chair asked whether this flexible approach to PEPs would continue going forward. The officer confirmed that this approach would continue after COVID.

The officer highlighted that during lockdown and the switch to remote learning, 1255 laptops from the DfE, which were allocated to children with a social worker, were made available to all LAC in Derby City schools. If pupils were out of area, then pupil premium plus funding was used to provide them with laptops. In accordance with national guidance LAC were encouraged to be in school if this was the best place for them to continue learning, but this was decided on a case by case basis, considering issues such as placement stability.

The Board were informed that during Lockdown 1 forty percent of LAC pupils attended school, in Lockdown 2 ninety-three percent attended school, and during Lockdown 3 sixty-five percent attended school. The Virtual School also provided carers with access to two online virtual education platforms (Maths Whizz and Readingwise) to promote Maths and English. Also, carers were encouraged to visit the Virtual School website, which was updated with learning resources and ideas for home learning.

The officer explained that attendance and exclusion reporting and analysis had not been possible due to the impact of the pandemic.

The Chair queried how the Virtual School had been able to assist with transition to further education, bearing in mind the lack of exams. The officer explained that the lack of GCSEs had meant that some pupils benefitted from a teaching assessment approach; including young people who do not like exams or others who opt out of school due to pressures; as they had been teacher assessed they had been able to get some grades. The Virtual School had worked with Derby College and schools through the PEP process; schools were conscious of the need for a good transition from secondary to further education. A lot of schools also put on virtual tours for young people. The transition of pupils from Year 6 to Year 7 also went well.

The Chair then asked if the Virtual School was able to make use of Government funding for catch-up for young people who may need extra support. The officer confirmed that government funding had not been directly accessed as there was enough funding available via Pupil Premium Plus.

Another member of the Board was interested in the 3 core functions of the virtual school described in paragraph 4.1, and the current difficulty of obtaining comparative data to set a baseline going forward. The officer confirmed that there was 3 to 4 years of data available prior to 2019/2020 exams; LAC had made great progress in 2018/2019 exams so there was baseline data for comparison when exams return. The Head of Strategy and Performance confirmed that the data had been discussed and reflected on in a recent meeting with Ofsted.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to recognise and understand the role and range of activities which are undertaken by the Virtual School in supporting improved outcomes.**

## **37/20      Update report on Education, Employment and Training – Leaving Care Service**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning Children and Young People. The report was presented by the Leaving Care Service Manager and gave an update on Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes for Care Leavers.

The officer presented some headline data which covered all care leavers allocated to leaving care team, including some 17 years and some 22/23/24-year olds. Current EET data as of March 2021 was 59.6%, which was a constant figure despite COVID and was on par with our statistical neighbours nationally. However, DCC would like to improve on this. The Team currently support 15 care leavers still at university, which was a challenge for both us and them on par with statistics at around about 6% of our cohort.

The officer explained that a Care Leavers Improvement Board was in place sometime ago, which covered every aspect of a young person's life education, health, training, and accommodation. A range of services used to meet to discuss how improvements could be made for Care Leavers; there were some successes,

but we now want to go for a more themed and focused approach to our development as a service. It was decided to start with EETs, to get all services in Derby supporting care leavers in one place to provide a EET offer. In September approximately 13 to 14 different agencies were brought together in one place, but there are more still to join. All the services concentrated on trying to improve EET outcomes for our Care Leavers. There were about 100 EETs at that time but they have since reduced to 90, as at March 2021. The services focused on the NEETs in the 19 to 20 age group first, as these are the most difficult to move on to either education, employment, or training. The aim was to see if we could make a real impact, all services in one place and going through one process to support these young people.

It was intended to start a new service delivery in April 2021. Dev Group agreed a TOR, and a referral document has been agreed that my team, and Personal Assistants (PAs) within the service, will be completing for everyone who is NEET. The Derby Adult Learning Service (DALs) have agreed initially to triage referrals. It was planned that this referral would go to a central place, to see what can be sourced by way of a course or support for the young person. It would then be circulated out to the rest of the people on the Development Board. There are a wide range of offers available, and work was ongoing to try and develop a matrix so that all the information could be in one place. The triage process will help to find the best place for that young person at that time, which hopefully will ensure a better outcome for the young person because they can then be tracked and monitored from referral to new system to positive outcome.

The aim was to pull together in a cohesive manner, instead of reliance on each PA to maintain information individually; it will be a more streamlined and focused approach. If the approach works, we would be trying to develop the same process for health (both mental and physical), also accommodation. All services interested in young people, and who can play a part in improving outcomes for young people, to be in themed targeted Development Groups or Boards.

The tracking process will be important as it needs to be as detailed as we can make it. Ideally every EET referred through to this process will be recorded on LCS. Talking to MI Teams across Derby about best way to capture information and chart progress on the child's journey, what works, what does not work, feedback from young people also to be recorded, to improve flexibility. A monitoring and tracking system was not in place now but was being developed; it could be on a spreadsheet, but this would be difficult to share and there would be GDPR issues. There was a need for a simple but detailed way to evidence the impact of this new approach.

The officer explained that the aim was to grow the offer as broadly as possible. Currently the University of Derby, YMCA, Derby College, DWP are all involved and seem to have new offers and programmes available every week. This process was a change of emphasis to try and streamline and target the support and make it bespoke to every young person. The biggest challenge with longer term NEETs was engagement; they need to understand that when they share their information with us, it might be passed to a different agency. That will be a challenge, but the skills of PAs will resolve that; ultimately this was the route that all NEETs will go through so that they can be put onto something straightaway, to avoid any drift and delay. At this point in time this process could only work in Derby; currently there are 90 NEETs of whom 28 live outside Derby, so most Derby's NEETs would be able to access this resource.

The Chair was pleased with the NEET journey going forward in terms of all working together, agencies have one place to go to, understand offer plus triage by DALs service; would like to know the timescales in terms of tracking and monitoring, what are the timescales.

The officer said ideally in a month's time, they hoped to get onto Liquid Logic data recording system (LCS) where every interaction with a young person was recorded. Currently it will have to be either an excel spread sheet or word document, which would need to be monitored and updated regularly. The original idea was that each board member would be able to update the information wherever they are based. The Committee noted that DALs use a system which might be able to be adapted to suit the needs of NEETS.

The Chair asked if there was anything the committee could do for the 28 young people placed outside of Derby. What could we do as a committee to help those PAs with understanding what was available in other local authority areas where our young people have been placed. She asked if it would be useful to discuss with other LA Corporate Parenting Committees to find out what was on their Local Offer. The officer confirmed that would be a good idea. Ideally every local authority has a Local Offer for their own Care Leavers. Recently in terms of accommodation we have been able to support Care Leavers from other areas with their Derby Council Tax. A Local Offer should be replicated across the country for every Care Leaver; no matter where they live they should be able to access the Care Leaver offer in that locality. The officer suggested liaising with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, at the next meeting of East Midland colleagues, to discuss whether the Local Offer can be reciprocated in terms of young people accessing. The Chair confirmed that similar work had been undertaken across Fostering and Adoption, and this would be the next step. The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care confirmed that the matter could also be raised by Director of Children's Services at a regional level.

The Chair suggested that as a recommendation she could write to her counterparts with the suggestion that those Care Leavers placed at a distance from their Local Authority being able to access Local Offers on a reciprocal basis.

#### **The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:**

- 1. to note the contents of the report**
- 2. to look at what the local offer to our out of area care leavers was and also for the Chair to write to the Chairs of the Corporate Parenting Committees in those local authorities where our twenty-eight out of area Care Leavers have been placed to find out if something could be done, in co-operation, to enable those Care Leavers to access Local Offers on a reciprocal basis and to raise as a profile Corporate Parenting Committees across the area.**

## **38/20      Independent Visitor Arrangements**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning. The report was presented by the Commissioning Manager CiC and provided details of a response to an open letter received from the National Independent Visitor Network (NIVN) in February 2021 regarding Independent Visitor arrangements.

The officer highlighted that the Council has a statutory duty to provide advocacy services for looked after children making complaints and to appoint Independent Visitors. Change, Grow, Live (CGL) provide this service in Derby City Council. An Annual Report of the service was due at the next Corporate Parenting Committee.

The officer informed the committee of the responses to the questions in the letter from NIVN which are summarised below.

- Question 1 & 4 - DCC has an Independent Visitor Provision called Change, Grow, Live (CGL) and they are delivering on their targets.
- Question 2 - The percentage of eligible children matched with an Independent Visitor was 39 (6%). The number of eligible children interviewed as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 was 635 CiC; more detail would be provided at the next Corporate Parenting Committee. The Chair queried if there was a way for Derby to achieve the minimum 10% access rate. The officer highlighted that there was a percentage of work around babies who would not benefit from an Independent Visitor, as there was a Child Guardian in place for these cases. DCC is potentially not doing itself justice by only saying 6% of children were matched with an IV. An officer confirmed that there was no limitation around demand for IVs; there was a figure of 40 in the contract but if there was more demand then it would be met.
- Question 3 - The Corporate Parenting Committee receive an Annual Report which details information about Independent Visitors and IV entitlement.
- Question 5 – Annual Feedback was given from CGL, together with an Annual Report on IV Services, which gives the Corporate Parenting Board an opportunity to ask questions.
- Question 6 – CGL was a contracted and commissioned service with quarterly reviews, referrals are discussed, voluntary recruitment to ensure eligible children have access to IVs.
- Question 7 – A work specification was due to come to the next Corporate Parenting Board Committee Meeting.

The Chair thanked the officer for providing the responses to the questions asked by NVIN.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the questions outlined in the letter, noting the arrangements in Derby**

## 39/20      Annual Performance Benchmarking Report

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services which was presented by the Head of Strategy and Performance. The report gave an update on Derby's children in care performance compared to national benchmarks

The Committee were informed that every year local authorities submit information to the Department for Education (DfE) on the children and young people they look after



This information is collated centrally and published annually. The officer reported that based on national data, at the end of March 2020, Derby City reported a final position of 588 children in care, an increase of 140 since the end of March 2017; as of today there are 640 children in care.

Derby's children in care population is broadly in line with comparator authorities and national averages, but is more diverse with more females and minority ethnic groups represented. At the end of March 2020 Derby also had a higher proportion of younger children (aged 0-9 years).

A total of 216 children and young people became looked after in Derby between April 2019 and March 2020. This year 179 became looked after but 142 safely exited care, a high percentage to independent care. The largest proportion of children that became looked after in 2019/20 entered care due to abuse and neglect which was the most common reason for children coming into care across the country.

A higher percentage of Derby's population are placed outside the City boundaries which reflects the small geographical area of the City. Nationally the largest percentage of children are placed in foster care but locally a higher percentage are with independent provision.

The officer highlighted areas for development:

- A small proportion of Derby's LAC experience multiple moves, which was slightly above the national average.
- Outcomes for care leavers aged 17 and 18 years who are in Education Employment or Training (EET) or living in suitable accommodation, are below the national averages.

The officer then highlighted areas of strength:

- A higher percentage of Derby's care leavers aged 19 – 21 years are in employment, education and training and most benefit from living in suitable accommodation.
- Derby's Children in Care benefit from consistently timely health checks which include dental checks

The Chair thanked the officer for the report which provided good data and was concise. She was concerned that there might be a dip in dental checks during the next phase due to the pandemic and asked if a plan was in place to prioritise LAC for checks. The Designated Nurse for LAC explained that NHS England had provided a letter of support indicating priority should be given for LAC, copies of which had been sent to Social Workers and Foster Carers to enable them to access dental checks for LAC, as many have had issues with registering LAC at local practices.

The Chair noted that a lot of work had been undertaken to raise the numbers of internal Foster Carers, but demographically a number would be looking to retire in the future. She requested that a report be brought to the Committee to look at the recent work done on recruitment and retention of Foster Carers. The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care confirmed that a report, looking at the work of the Corporate Fostering Board over the last 18 months, would be brought to a future meeting.

Another Committee member asked if there was any further information available about placements outside of the City boundaries. The officer confirmed that the national data analysis standard was 20 miles outside of the boundary area, and that work had been undertaken to understand the outcomes of these placements, Derby City do also place a high number of children in outlying areas like Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, which could be further than 20 miles away from City boundaries, and analysis from these placements can be brought to a future meeting. The Designated Nurse for LAC highlighted that nurses could cover placements up to 30 miles from the City.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:**

- 1. To note that at the end of March 2020 Derby had a higher than average level of need represented by above average rates of children in care**
- 2. To note the latest performance results set out in Appendix 1 with key outcomes highlighted in paragraph 4.7 of the report.**

MINUTES END