

ITEM 4

Time commenced 1.00pm

Time finished 2.30pm

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Tuesday 16th February 2021

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

In attendance: Pervez Akhtar, Corporate Parenting Lead
Stephen Atkinson, Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Partnership
Katie Evans, Commissioning Manager CiC
Andrew Kaiser, Head of Specialist Services
Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care
Heather Peet, Designated Nurse
Andy Smith, Strategic Director People's Services
Lorraine Smith, Commissioning Manager - Early Help and Priority Families
Connie Spencer, Youth Mayor
Priya Gill, Deputy Youth Mayor
Marlene Upchurch, Chair of Foster Care Association

Stephen Johnson, Derbyshire Police

22/20 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Pauline Anderson, Director, Learning, Inclusion and Skills, Judy Levitt, Team Manager Early Help and Children's Safeguarding, Johanna Barker, Team Manager Early Help and Children's Safeguarding

23/20 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were none.

24/20 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

25/20 Minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

26/20 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 three meetings of the CiCC, which were in October, November, and December. All three meetings were hosted by the former Participation Officer.

The Committee were informed that at the November meeting the Participation Officer spoke to the group about encouraging new members for the CiCC. The Participation Officer also suggested that CiCC members invite young people who they thought would enjoy being involved in the meetings. The Committee were also informed that in-house Children's Homes were now able to facilitate young people joining virtual meetings, so there should be new members at the next meeting. At the November meeting it was announced that the Corporate Parenting Committee had agreed to extend the age range of the of CiCC members to 24 years old, and in future there would be two meetings, one for younger and one for older members. Change Grow Live (CGL) also attended the November meeting to discuss their role and how the visitor and advocacy services work with CGL. The CGL noted the comments from the CiCC who felt that young people were not aware of their services. In future CGL plan to publicise and promote their services to increase uptake by young people. At the December meeting the Participation Officer announced that he was leaving the role as he had secured a full-time position in a Residential Care Home.

The Commissioning Manager outlined the recruitment process for a replacement Participation Officer which had taken place during December, with virtual interviews taking place in January 2021. There had been a four-member interview panel, including herself and a member of the CiCC. There had been an appointment and the successful applicant would join the Council after DBS checks had been undertaken. The Commissioning Officer highlighted the input of the young person in the recruitment panel, which was crucial to the final selection of the successful candidate.

The Chair of the Committee thanked the former Participation Officer for all the work undertaken whilst in post. The committee were pleased that a young person had been involved in the recruitment process for a new Participation Officer and they looked forward to welcoming the successful applicant.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:

- 1. To consider the content of the report and feedback from CiCC and engagement with care leavers**
- 2. To consider ways to encourage new members to become involved in the CiCC.**

27/20 Children's Placements Overview Report

The Committee received a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning (Children and Young People). The report was presented by the Commissioning Manager. The report provided an overview of the type and range of placements commissioned with external providers for Children in Care and Children in Need.

The officer highlighted how important it was to have safe accommodation and support in place for children and young people. The local authority liaises first with internal foster carers and children's homes, then work with lists of providers on compliant framework agreements, who can show that they can offer safe accommodation and good support. There are three frameworks used to source placements: D2N2 Children in Care Framework for fostering and children's homes, Accommodation and Support DPS for 16-17-year olds for semi-independent placements and support accommodation and Nottinghamshire DPS for semi-independent placements for 16-17-year olds with complex needs.

The Committee were informed that there has been an increase in the number of children in care. On 31st March 2019 there were 568 children in care; this increased to 588 on 31 March 2020. On 31 December 2020 there were 640 children in care. From December 2019 to December 2020 there was an increase of 12% in external foster placements, an increase of 31% in external children's homes. There was also a reduction of 2.7% in external semi-independent placements, which included unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and was due to changes in the process and the impact of the pandemic.

The officer highlighted the work undertaken on quality assurance with social care colleagues and providers. It was explained that regulated settings, such as Independent Fostering Agencies and Residential Children's Homes, are inspected regularly by Ofsted. Derby City only make placements with providers who have a "Good" or "Outstanding" Ofsted Inspection.

Semi-independent settings are unregulated, but they are a large focus of quality assurance work by the service, with specific pre-placement checks undertaken on the provider before approving them on the Supported Accommodation DPS. A quality assurance programme was also in place which considered the suitability of accommodation by monitoring providers and property during the year, based on a Red Amber Green (RAG) rating.

The officer explained that if any complaints or concerns are raised, they are investigated and shared with the D2N2 framework. If improvements are needed an action plan is put in place with the provider and monitored. The local authority also undertakes a lot of development work with the aim of increasing local sufficiency and improving the accommodation offer for children in care. The focus was on ensuring that the right types of placements are available in the right place, which meant that there would be more placements local to Derby. Derby City Council works closely with other local authorities across D2N2 to share resources and best practice and to improve the capacity and quality of placements across the whole area.

The Committee were informed that a new two-year programme called Supporting children and young people to Achieve Resilience (STARS) went live in 2020. The aim of the programme was concentrating on achieving outcomes in a variety of accommodation settings. The aims include reducing the chance of escalation of children in foster care placements at risk of breaking down moving into residential homes, and re-uniting children in care with either primary carers or their birth families.

The officer also highlighted that the voice of the child was gathered as part of the face to face quality assurance process when visiting placements. Feedback on their

accommodation was encouraged to ensure there was a chance for young people to express their opinions.

The Chair was assured by the report, particularly the Quality Assurance aspect; it was much more outcome focused, specifically the STARs Programme. The Chair highlighted that Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members from across the region meet and work together on regular basis to see if there is anything they can do to help in terms of fostering and placements. They are working together and breaking down barriers.

A councillor noted that the numbers of children in care was rising but was reassured that the provision and support was in place for them. It was good to know that more and more of our young children were being placed locally, where it was safe to do so. The councillor then raised concerns about the number of children who go missing from their placements and the frequency of these episodes; the councillor asked if there had been any progress in managing these missing children episodes.

The Head of Specialist Services reported that there had been several recommendations from the last committee as a result a more streamlined response format for return interviews had been put in place, in collaboration with colleagues from the police and residential homes.

The committee were informed training for non-violent resistance for Residential Home Staff had been looked at as a part of a longer-term training programme for residential staff. The programme would be prefaced with training from the CONCORDAT and trauma informed training, and then followed by the non-violent resistance training. CONCORDAT Training had been delivered for new staff at the Rosewood children's home in December; this was a partnership event led by the Residential Homes, the Youth Offending Service and also had some input from Police and Health.

Residential Homes had been linked with the new police missing persons team. In the south of the city the police missing persons team are linked in with the children homes and attend Concordat tactical meetings. There are single points of contact in the police for each of the homes in the City, County, and the private sector. There was a good partnership with police around this aspect. Good Information was being received from Police Tasking meetings, such as intelligence on hotspots, risk issues, and other young people that our young people in children's homes might be linked in with.

Whilst there was a high volume of missing episodes from children in care homes, it does show that there was good compliance with missing from home care protocols. Concern would be raised if there was a lack of reporting of children going missing. The reassurance that the committee was looking for was the existence of the partnership work with the police and key partners around missing and youth crime, which could be seen. An information brochure for Residential Homes was being developed through the CONCORDAT work. Partnership organisations have now supplied enough information on what they are doing to begin to prepare a brochure.

The councillor felt that the committee were reassured that partnership work was being undertaken in relation to children and young people going missing from our homes. The partnership work was extensive and well-co-ordinated.

The Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Partnership asked what action was being taken by the authority, in working together with D2N2, to put pressure on the government to influence sufficiency of placements and cost. The Commissioning manager confirmed that information was fed into task groups on a regular basis. They were currently working the Foster Carer National Association who are dealing with over two hundred referrals for one placement per day; there was a national need for sufficiency of placements. The Chair gave assurances that both Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members would work with D2N2, the East Midlands Regional Group and the Local Government Association to highlight the need for more foster carers and placements in the country. The Director of People's Services highlighted that the DFE have now launched a Care Review into the increased demand, pressures and cost efficiency, which have worsened due to the pandemic. There was an increase in children coming into care and staying longer, the placement sufficiency issue was very challenging.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:

- 1. To consider and note the content of the report**
- 2. That the committee were reassured that partnership work being done in relation to children and young people going missing from our homes was extensive and well-co-ordinated.**

28/20 Update report on Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service for Looked After Children (LAC)

The Committee received a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning Children and Young People. The report was presented by the Children in Care Commissioning and Placements Manager.

This report highlights the support Derby City Council (DCC) are offering to our children and young people in care, their carers, and the professionals around the child or young person, to ensure they have a safe place to talk to people who can offer different types of support conversations, groups, and therapies.

The Committee were informed that since September 2020 DCC has worked alongside Action for Children to embed a new service. Action for Children were successful in tendering for this service, they have an excellent track record in ensuring young people and their carers are supported and outcomes are achieved. Action for Children had previously been successful in delivering services like Futures in Mind. The new service offer was an expanded offer, not just for Derby but across city and county boundaries, working alongside Derbyshire and twenty- five miles beyond. The service was reaching more of our children and young people. There was also an increase in the provision offered, with staff able to deliver services from Leopold Street and also at outreach locations where needed. The staff from previous service "The Keep" have been transferred to new service and six new posts have been also created. This was a jointly funded service between Derby City Council and the NHS Derby and Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The service will reach more of our children and young and carers, and delivers therapeutic work, including "theraplay", attachment therapy and a new area called Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) Service. The service supports children in placements around Derby and the surrounding areas, specifically with the aim of

moving them back to Derby, the focus was one of where it was suitable to bring back placements to the local area.

There will be a continued focus on trauma informed services, as well as increasing group work and targeted group work, and reflective practice, both regular and specifically dedicated. The service will also pick up and increase training such as trauma reform, to attachment training for carers and professionals. It was flexible training to meet the needs of carers, and professional staff can also feed into that training programme.

The new service was working caseloads transferred to it and ensuring therapeutic work with children and young peoples, foster carers and parents could continue, and that the service could be consistent. The new service has also begun to receive new referrals and was continuing to pick these up daily. The service had been communicated to social care teams and wider professionals and the take up was starting to be positive. Regular meetings are taking place with local authority social care colleagues and Action for Children, to ensure Derby children and carers are getting what they need. The service could be prioritised and adapted to meet their needs.

Most referrals are for young people between five to ten and eleven to fifteen years of age. Consultation was still the largest area of work for action for children but that was followed up by therapeutic work. The new service was linked into the wider emotional health and wellbeing offer provided by the CCG, and referrals that are not accepted are signposted to more appropriate services based on individual needs, through the CCG Community Triage offer.

Foster carers would continue to be supported by Derby City Council Foster Carer helpline and their social worker. Action for Children have been pro-active in the contract during the pandemic, staff delivered most services remotely through video conferencing and telephone, with some face to face.

The officer informed the Committee that children and young people were engaged with through the tender process and they continue to be engaged. The name of the service was going to change, and children and young people are being asked to suggest a new name for the service: these suggestions are being shortlisted.

The Chair stated that from her point of view she was pleased with the smooth transition, especially given the Covid situation; she was also pleased about expansion of services and training for carers and staff, and the assurances about referrals in and out to other services if there was no access on to the programme. It was shown that the voices of the children and young people are heard, and they are involved in terms of the services provided, what they need and want, as well as what services the professionals need.

The Chair thanked the Commissioning Manager and asked for thanks to be passed to Action for Children for their work in getting services in place.

A councillor was interested in the measurable outcomes detailed and asked if the committee would be given more figures and evidence later. The officer confirmed that Quarterly monitoring was taking place. They had been supplied with a dashboard which they would be able to share at a future meeting.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to note the contents of the report.

29/20 Children's Permanence Team – Quarter 3 Update Report 2020-21

The Committee received a report of the Director Early Help and Children's Social Care. The report was presented by the Head of Specialist Services and provided an update on the Children's Permanence Teams' progress and strategy for the third quarter of 2020-21.

The Children's Permanence Team was made up of social workers and community practitioners trained to exit children and young people from care. The officer highlighted the team's targets for this year and next year. Targets for young people exiting care in 2020 - 21 were twenty-four and twenty-eight in 2021-22. It was explained that the targets had been set as part of the demand management agenda to manage the number of children coming into care. Young people exit care by re-unification to family members or kinship carers.

The officer explained the structure of the team and informed the committee that three new staff had joined the Permanence team in 2020, as part of the overall demand management approach; this included another full time Social Worker and a Children's Practitioner. The team had been fully staffed in quarter three with no staff vacancies or sickness.

The Committee were informed that during quarter three, five children had exited care, two with the making of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), one had returned to parents, and two had returned to extended family members. Another young person had been stepped down from external to internal residential care.

The officer explained that the pandemic had a huge impact on the number of exits through Courts, as only urgent cases were being heard during April to September. However, Court dates for first hearings are now coming through and it was forecast that a further eight SGOs will happen by April 2021; nine SGOs are planned in quarter four which will achieve savings in 2021-22. The team are working with two families, and are optimistic that permanence can be achieved through Child Arrangement Orders (CAOs) before the end of the financial year. The team are also starting assessments on three Placement with Parents Orders (PWP), which could result in rehabilitation in the coming months. It was estimated that the team could achieve sixteen to eighteen exits in 2020/21.

The officer then highlighted the work of the Adoption Team. The Committee were informed that fourteen Best Interest (BIs) Agency Decision Maker decisions were made in Quarter three and there was a total of thirty-three BIs made to date this year.

The committee were informed that between October and December the team was actively home finding for eleven children, of which five have secured "forever" homes. Also, during quarter three, fourteen children moved to their adoptive placement. Including quarter one and quarter two figures, forty-three children were placed between April to December 2020, which was a significant achievement given the restrictions of COVID.

The officer also highlighted the projected adoption figures for quarter four 2020/21 it was explained that good progress has been made in quarter three, with twelve placements projected before the end of quarter four, making a total of fifty-five children in the 2020-21 financial year. The officer felt that the service would perform better next year regarding “exits back to families” due to new staff now in place. A new Team Manager had been appointed and was settling in well.

The Chair stated that she was pleased with the additional support for SGOs, as well as the numbers in child adoption figures. The issues around Courts and the backlog prior to COVID were noted. The Chair asked if the officer had any information about how the Courts will be able to deal with the backlog; was this something the Committee could assist with. The officer confirmed that there was now more capacity in Courts. A hybrid court system was in place, where not everyone has to be physically present at hearings. A good number of cases will be progressed in quarter four as the Courts are committed to progress as many cases as possible. The Chair was reassured but stated that the Committee would like to look at this issue again later this year to check that the increased input has worked. The Chair requested that her thanks and recognition of the achievements made be passed to the team.

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the ongoing performance of the Children’s Permanence Team in the following areas:

- **How many young people exited care per quarter and the forecast for 2021-22**
- **The arrangements for young people exiting care**
- **The additional work that was being completed in the team**
- **The identification of service strengths and areas for development**

30/20 Inspection and Monitoring of Children’s Homes – Update, Inspection/Regulation 44 Reports and Member Visits

The Committee received a report of the Director Early Help and Children’s Social Care. The report gave an overview of Derby City Council’s Children’s Residential Homes internal and external inspections.

The Committee were informed that Ofsted have suspended formal inspections and assurance visits have been undertaken in relation to the Covid-19 situation. These have replaced the full and interim inspections during the pandemic. The officer explained that the visits are undertaken over a two-day period. The visits give Ofsted assurance that vulnerable children are getting the help, care and protection they need. Ofsted also focus on leadership and manager, the quality of professional practice and the impact on children and young people’s lives. The committee were informed that no graded judgement was made but Ofsted sets out what is going well and what needs to improve. There had been two Assurance Visits in September 2020.

The officer informed the Board that two children’s homes had been closed at the end of 2019, but one had since re-opened with a new team recruited. The other home was provisionally due to open in April or March 2021. A new manager had been recruited and a team was in place.

The officer explained that in relation to Regulation 44 Visits, temporary measures were put in place, in line with Government and Ofsted guidelines. In June 2020 it was decided to restrict non-essential visits to all Children's Homes, and to undertake the visits virtually to ensure there was oversight maintained during the pandemic. Given the workload and pressures within the service, the Children's Residential Care Service's Regulation 44 Visitor undertook those visits. The Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Partnership highlighted that in three out of five Regulation 44 Visits to Children's Homes, recording of information had been identified as an issue. He stated that keeping information about children was vitally important from a safeguarding point of view. The officer confirmed that the report indicated that the home managers had put in place the action raised by the Independent Visitor. The officer confirmed that further information could be sought to reassure the committee that those actions are now completed.

The Committee were informed that no Member visits had been undertaken during the past twelve months due to COVID-19. However, a group of Members had undertaken training and visits would resume as soon as it was safe. The Chair stated that Members would look forward to re-commencing visiting children's homes

The officer highlighted a new development programme over this year, on the principle that the smaller the home the better it would be to manage the needs of the residents. A portfolio of four transition properties had been secured in 2020, which would be run by internal resolution staff. The properties were one to two bedroom and were aimed to house children under sixteen. Two cluster properties had been approved in March; they would support children on an individual basis. There was a clear and robust process of matching children in the homes. Sometimes a home of two to five bedrooms can be too large. The programme was additional to supporting the sufficiency strategy.

The officer then highlighted the "Host Family Scheme", which was a befriending scheme to support young people in care. The host families would all be from Derby; young people would not however stay with the host families overnight. There was also a "Shared Lives Scheme", aimed at children from the age of seventeen to eighteen, who were not quite ready to move into independent living. The scheme would focus on giving them a smooth transition into adult life with support.

The officer explained that ongoing recruitment was always a challenge, and the service was currently working with the Adult Learning Service to look at recruitment.

The Chair noted the interesting changes in Children's Homes, moving from larger sixteen bedded homes to more smaller homes, and now transitioning to cluster homes. The service was constantly horizon scanning to see what worked. The Committee understood the recruitment issues and were pleased to see the links made with other services in the Council.

The Committee were interested in the Host Family Scheme and asked if there was training and support for Host Families provided. The officer confirmed that the recruitment and training was supported by the training department; it was like Foster Carer training but was not as extensive. The officer explained that the scheme was run based on families being supported by internal residential home staff. The Committee thought that the scheme was creative and innovative in looking at

different ways of helping young people. They would like to have an update in future to see how it was working.

A councillor asked whether older looked after children (LAC) could be invited to discuss the transition, cluster properties, in a forum, as they may be able to advise on some aspects such as being better prepared, or doing things differently for a better result. The officer explained that the transitional homes concept came initially from Care Leavers who felt it would be better to have more support. The councillor agreed that it was vital they were prepared for the transition to independent living. In terms of increasing their development, the smaller the environment the more concentration of support would be available for that young person. It was difficult to provide individual attention for young people in larger homes.

Finally, the officer highlighted that an Ofsted Reassurance Visit had taken place virtually last week at a children's home. The visit was positive. Ofsted had confirmed they were satisfied with all that they had seen and heard from children and young people and the staff, and they would not be visiting the children's home in person.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:

- 1. To note the content of the report, as inspections are a key element of regulatory function in relation to Children's Homes. Management visits are a statutory requirement**
- 2. To note the content of the report as a Corporate Parent.**

MINUTES END