

ITEM 4

Time commenced 1.00pm
Time finished 3.30pm

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE **Tuesday 27th October 2020**

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

In attendance: Patrick Aherne, Participation Officer
Pervez Akhtar, Corporate Parenting Lead
Stephen Atkinson, Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire
Safeguarding Partnership
Fiona Colton, Head of Service, Early Help
Graeme Ferguson, Headteacher Virtual School for LAC
Andrew Kaiser, Head of Specialist Services
Judy Levitt, Team Manager, Children's Permanence Team
Mandy McDonald, Child Protection Partnership
Sally Penrose, Head of Service, Fostering
Stephen Johnson, Derbyshire Police

10/20 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Hezelgrave, Gurmail Nizzer, Director of Children's Integrated Commissioning, Pauline Anderson, Director, Learning, Inclusion and Skills, Andy Smith, Strategic Director of People Services, Suanne Lim, Service Director for Early Help and Children's Social Care, Connie Spencer, Youth Mayor and Heather Peet, Designated Nurse Looked After Children

11/20 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were none.

12/20 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

13/20 Minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

14/20 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 Participation Officer.

Councillors noted that, since the last report, there have been three meetings of the CiCC, which were in July, September and October. Details of the meetings are outlined in the report.

The Committee were informed that the Participation Officer had encouraged discussions in the July meeting including increasing the age range from 18 to 24 years. CiCC members suggested that the meetings could start at a different time perhaps 7.30pm – 8.30pm for older members so that topics more relevant to them could be discussed then. The CiCC members also suggested that the meetings focus on specific topics and that speakers be invited. Topics suggested by CiCC were Leaving Care Team and the Advocacy Service. The Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Partnership also expressed an interest in attending the CiCC. The Officer explained that the meeting in September was used to talk about the Consultation being sent out to young people regarding the services they had received in lockdown. It was planned to send out the Consultation around Christmas.

The Officer informed the Committee of the addition of a support officer to assist with the CiCC. Currently they were struggling with encouraging new membership to the CiCC. The officer explained that mail shots had been sent out to all carers and young people living nearby or within easy travelling distance to the meeting venue (pre-lockdown), and had attended various events like foster carer training and team meetings with other professionals in efforts to promote the CiCC and attract new members. The officer had also liaised with participation officers in other Local Authorities (LAs) to find out if young people placed in Derby by them would like to attend the CiCC. The officer welcomed any input and ideas from the Committee to achieve an increase in membership. It was suggested that Residential Homes are keen to join and perhaps this could be facilitated as they now had laptops.

The Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Partnership took the opportunity to highlight the need to ensure the right safeguards are in place at meetings.

The Committee thanked the officer for all the work undertaken so far and hoped that in the long term the results of these efforts would have an impact on membership numbers. They also stated Committee members would welcome suggestions about changes or improvements from CiCC members.

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.**
- 3. To extend the age range of the Council from 18 years to 24 years of age, to incorporate Care Leavers.**

15/20 Report on reducing criminalisation by Children in Care Concordat and young people in care involved with YOS

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care. The report was presented by the Head of Specialist Care. The report provided an overview of progress made since April 2019 and recommendations for next steps.

The Officer informed the Committee that, following a successful pilot programme at the Sinfin residential care homes, the CONCORDAT Pilot was rolled out to all DCC residential homes and an updated Action Plan had been developed to support the roll out.

The officer highlighted how progress was delayed by two home closures and it was further delayed by the COVID 19 global pandemic. However, there had been some progress made on the Action Plan (see paragraph 4.4 of the report).

Paragraph 4.5 shows the changes in volumes of recorded crime for all three homes. The officer explained that Police data demonstrated increases in recorded crimes, calls for service and incidents for all three homes over the period. The Committee were informed that there has been an impact on recording crime following an HMI Inspection of Constabularies & Fire & Rescue Services, the increased crime recording having affected some crime types more than others.

The officer explained that the YOS Information Analyst had gathered data from YOS systems which showed that fewer LAC were involved with YOS and there was a reduction in the number of offences committed in 2018-19. This data seems to be different to the Police data, but it should be noted that the Police have changed the way that crimes are recorded, which seems to artificially inflate the number of offences committed by LAC. The committee were also informed that a high number of calls to report an offence do not always lead to prosecution, plus there may be a time lag between young people being reported for an offence and then prosecution.

The successes in the YOS data are a result of strong partnership working between the YOS, discussions on LAC cases have led to offences being taken out from Court listings and dealt with by different routes. The Board were informed that Court appearances by LAC had been reduced by just over half (51%).

The Board were informed that overall, as a result of CONCORDAT, there had been 56% fewer offences, 51% fewer court appearances, 24% more face to face contacts and no breaches. The Officer also highlighted the good DFE performance data at 4.21 of the report which demonstrated reduced persistent offending, reduced seriousness of offences and less offending in the homes as well as less violence.

The officer explained that there continues to be challenges in delivering CONCORDAT which include:

- Pressure from partner agencies to move young people out of the City into secure accommodation without understanding the impact of this on young people. It would be better if Partner Agencies all agreed to keep young people in Derby and out of secure accommodation.

The Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Partnership agreed that there was an over reliance on the use of secure accommodation and confirmed that he would re-iterate that message through the Safeguarding Partnership.

- Another challenge was the lack of activity/leisure resources across the City for young people to help guide them away from negative behaviour.
- The closure of the two children's homes had been another challenge. Once these were re-opened CONCORDAT principles would need to be put in place in the homes.

The next steps for CONCORDAT would be to review, re-fresh and re-launch to ensure multiple partners bought in to the service. There are plans to arrange a Steering group led by Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner in October 2020 to ensure there was senior officer support behind the re-launch of CONCORDAT across partner organisations. The officer also highlighted the new residential homes offer, with sites in Sinfin opening in early 2020 and the use of Enhanced Case Management Meetings in all homes, plus the use of "REMEDI", the contracted victim service for YOS, the Girls Group and the link to Youth Alliance.

A Councillor queried how the figures could be benchmarked; was there a clear baseline, can it be seen if progress was being made. The officer confirmed that the figures are benchmarked against last year. This is the first year in relation to the four homes, in 2021 comparison data would be available. The councillor asked if we could ensure the police data would be available next year, and the officer stated that links had been established with the Police and the data would be available.

The Committee confirmed its support to CONCORDAT, they wanted it to continue and expected that outcomes would improve in future.

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the development and progress with regards to CONCORDAT to date.

16/20 CSE and Children in Care Report

The Committee received a report of the Head of Quality Assurance. The report was presented by the Child Protection Manager.

The Committee were informed that 40% of the Child Protection Manager's role was to lead the strategy around children at risk of exploitation.

The officer focused on five key points in the report:

- **Changes to strategy since 2017** – Derby began to review its work and developed the strategy to move away from a focus on sexual exploitation to incorporate a range of emerging issues identified in the national serious and violence against women and girl's strategies. The CSE strategy was re-named the Child at Risk of Exploitation Strategy (CRE). Examples of the types of exploitation which are being reviewed in Derby were drugs activity, violent crime, shoplifting, labour exploitation. The Board were informed that these issues were already being dealt with through a range of forums with

different agency leads. However, the issues were not reviewed in a formal child exploitation framework like the exploitation strategy, governed by local safeguarding children partnership arrangements.

- **Data Overview and Comparison** – the officer provided a brief summary of data over the past year and preceding year so that the Committee could see the difference in the number of cases referred and what type of cases were being dealt with. Last year from April to May there were 102 cases, 53 new cases, 49 were already open 43 cases were closed, 15 were LAC and 4 from other authorities placed in Derby for whom Derby does not have responsibility.

Types of exploitation recorded include; 45 cases of child criminal exploitation, 49 child sexual exploitation cases, 8 cases had both criminal and sexual exploitation related to them. The officer stated that it was not a surprise that there are more referrals as that was the point of the strategy, and there was more criminal than sexual exploitation. LAC children concerns are far less of a feature in the data; issues of risk for them tend to be missing episodes and cannabis abuse and anti-social behaviour. This group has increased vulnerability, so it was likely that they are targeted because of this. Only 5 children in Derby were targeted, 3 were from outside Derby, 4 of the cases have been closed due to the risk reducing, 6 cases were LAC children from out of authority that were reviewed as a reciprocal arrangement with other authorities in the region.

- **How we respond to cases** – the officer gave a brief overview of the kind of strategy in respect of regional work and multi-agency work which was governed by vulnerable young people group. There was three-way commissioning in place between Derbyshire Police, Derby City Council and Derbyshire County Council. There were some commissioned services like Catch 22 who deal with children at medium to high risk; this organisation work with up to 50 children in a year. Safe and Sound also provide support to low level risk cases. The Committee were informed that the earlier the involvement the better the result for children and young people.
- **Information about COVID for children on CRE strategy** – There was concern that COVID restrictions were used sometimes for avoidant behaviour. Officers try to do doorstep visits, but they can't do confidential work in these situations. The service was making every effort to engage parents and children in virtual meetings so that their views and concerns can be heard. Feedback for children and young people can be seen at paragraph 4.12 of the report. The Committee were told that three cases were referred for counselling support because of low moods. Also, there was a pattern of behaviour of young men involved in anti-social behaviour. The risks extended to exploitation and to the risk of bringing back some form of infection.

In April the officer created a CRE COVID Plan, which was circulated to all professionals, to show what support was available to children and parents. There have also been monthly updates through a newsletter style email, which was sent to all safeguarding leads in schools, CRE champions and Deputy Heads of Service to cascade down. The newsletter gave information about where and how to get support, as well as what resources were available to use during COVID. The officer then explained that the service

has now moved towards face to face visits again and has seen better engagement with the strategy because of this. Regional work has been completed which focused on aligning risk assessments to create a consistent response across the region. The five Ps Pursue, Partnership, Prevent, Protect and Provide focus on bringing together work of multi-agency partners to ensure a good response across the region to 5Ps.

Training was put on hold while the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Boards merged but virtual training has been organised, (see details at paragraph 4.21 of the report).

The theme of the report is safety. There was no doubt that agencies across Derby are aware of CRE as a child protection concern and are committed to safeguarding risks. However, the sooner the service can return to face to face working the better. Children have a clear pathway to support, they have a voice in meetings, children in care have advocates. DCC was doing everything in its power to safeguard children and to educate them about risks.

A Councillor thanked the officer, noting that CRE was a complex issue which was made even more complex by COVID. The councillor did have concerns about the reciprocal arrangements on reading the report but was now assured that they are in place and working. Avoidant behaviour was another concern and the councillor asked whether we are we able to keep records and if there are peaks and troughs. The officer confirmed that children and young people are monitored on an individual basis and by engagement with families.

Another Councillor was concerned that there was a clear Mental Health pathway available for children and young people to access. The officer confirmed that the CAMHS service was available to any child that presents at A&E. Voluntary sector agencies also provide support. Some schools have commissioned services to deal with Mental Health issues; the Building Sound Minds project was also highlighted.

The Councillor then queried if there was a push towards getting more professionals doing one to ones with children either in local parks or attending school, as children do want that connection to talk to adults. The officer confirmed that there was a directive last week to move back to face to face visits and where possible officers have socially isolated to have those discussions.

The Committee thanked the officer for all the work that went into the report, they hoped that more could be done using face to face meetings in the future, and they requested that their thanks be passed onto the service.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved

- 1. to ensure that professionals and the authority focusses equally on all forms of exploitation that affect children on and offline and on disrupting and prosecuting the adult offenders**
- 2. to ensure that children in care are protected from exploitation and any risks identified are responded to urgently in line with statutory guidelines and procedural expectations, which are all enhanced by the**

corporate parents protecting and safeguarding them to achieve the best outcomes.

17/20 Report on Children in Care Educational Attainment

The Committee received a report of the Director Learning, Inclusion and Skills. The report was presented by the Virtual School Headteacher and provided an update on the academic outcomes of Looked After Children (LAC) 2019/20

The Committee were told that all the exams and assessments in 2019/20 had been cancelled and there was no published data available. Ofsted would not be using the data in any Inspections and the outcomes in the report were for internal use only.

The Committee were also informed that in Primary Schools Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Tests did not take place, so no data was available. In Secondary Schools teacher assessments were used to award pupils GCSE grades. When more data becomes available a full report will be put together by the Headteacher of the Virtual School.

The Committee noted that the number of Y11 pupils in the reportable group (12 months or more on 31 March) had increased from 25 in 2018 to 36 in 2020. The number of pupils with SEND needs in the group had doubled from 7 in 2019 (46%) to 14 in 2020 approximately (70%).

The officer informed the committee that in the new GCSE grading system the old Grade "C" was equivalent to either a Grade 4 (standard pass) or Grade 5 (a good pass). The graphs at 4.3 of the report show that despite the increasing number of SEND pupils and less pupils with no SEND, the numbers of pupils achieving grade 4 or 5 has held up this year. There were 7 pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English. However, the comparison percentages shown in the table have gone down because the cohort this year is larger than last years. The committee were informed that there was currently no data for Attainment 8 and Progress 8; this data will not be available until early next year.

The officer also informed the committee that pupils who had received targeted support in a wide range of subjects, including maths, english, science and history had all achieved at least a grade 4 in the subjects they had received support in. The committee noted that two pupils who attended Derby City secondary schools had achieved a suite of higher-grade GCSE passes

The committee were pleased with the results that had been achieved by the Virtual School pupils.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to recognise the achievement of Derby's children who are looked after.

18/20 Independent Reviewing Service

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services. The report was presented by the Deputy Head of Service Children's Quality Assurance.

The Committee noted that as part of the IRO Handbook 2010 statutory guidance there was a requirement for the manager of the IRO Service to produce an Annual Report for the scrutiny of members of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

The officer informed the Committee that there are an increasing number of children in care, 588 at the end of year compared to 562 (18-19) and 491 (17-18). The IROs are a stable and experienced staff group although recently they have had some challenges to overcome, including workforce issues. They are currently down by one member of staff; the increased workload has impacted the reviews undertaken. There has been a slight reduction in timeliness of reviews to 92.7% compared to 96.4% in 2018-19. The target is 97%. The officer was working on recruitment to get the staffing levels back up.

The Committee were informed that the IRO service has continued to ensure that children and young people participated in their reviews. In 2019/2020 97.5% of children and young people participated in their reviews, which was excellent. The target was 97%. There was also very positive feedback on their reviews by children and young people, parents and carers.

There has been a reduction in the number of asylum-seeking children coming to Derby. Previously there had been a high number coming into care, 40 at the end of 2018-2019. This had been reduced to 27 at the end of 2019-20. The Board noted that national developments at the port of entry to the country had assisted this reduction.

The Board were informed that the IRO team continues to have a good working relationship with the LAC nurses, health visitors, lead nurse and designated nurse. There was continued positive progress in completion rates on Health Assessments, Dental Checks and Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ's) (90%)

During the COVID Pandemic the IRO team have had to use E technology to undertake reviews rather than face to face reviews. However, positive feedback from young people and parents has been received. Currently all reviews are still undertaken virtually.

The continuing challenge of increasing numbers of children in care was noted by the Committee. A councillor asked for assurance from the officer that the right thresholds were in place and whether there was enough staffing capacity in place to meet the challenge of the increasing numbers of children in care. The officer confirmed that once the team was fully staffed the right resources would be in place. The councillor requested that the officer keep the Committee informed of any issues.

The committee noted the percentage of participation of children and young people in their reviews was at 97.5% and stated that this was a credit to the IRO team. The Committee expressed their approval of the outcomes in the report and asked the officer to pass their thanks to the IROs for all their hard work during the Pandemic.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to note the report.

19/20 Update Report on Children in Care Missing

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services. The report was presented by the Head of Service Early Help & Children's Safeguarding.

The report gave an overview of the direction of travel to monitor and support improved outcomes for those children and young people who go missing.

The Officer informed the Committee that there had been 450 Missing Episodes during April 2020 to September 2020. Overall, the number of missing episodes has remained consistent despite COVID 19 and Lockdown. There was a small group of 5 young people in Residential Care who account for 290 (65.4%) of the missing episodes. The officer advised the Committee that there needs to be more continued and focused work with Residential Services to improve these figures.

The Committee were informed that the challenge was for the CIC Team to understand why these children and young people were going missing and where they are going. A quarterly Missing Strategic Group are focusing on developing a better understanding of this. The committee were informed that when a young person goes missing a "Return Interview" must take place on their return. The interview was a lengthy process and can become onerous when there are frequent missing episodes by the same young person. The Return Interview Form was currently being revised and shortened to ensure that it was easier to complete. Staff are being encouraged to complete Return Interviews to timescale.

The officer also highlighted the following further targeted interventions which are being put in place to support Residential Homes.

- Adding a missing and return interview section into a pack for children entering care.
- Creating a LAC booklet around missing with partner agencies for independent homes and foster carers.
- A shortened more cohesive return interview for practitioners to aid in completing return interviews
- Offer Non Violent Resistance (NVR) training to Residential staff to help support interventions to prevent a missing episode
- To strengthen the relationship with CIC and Residential services to move to prevention
- Work with Concordat

A Councillor was interested in the "where, why, when and how" of missing episodes and would be keen to have an update report for a future meeting.

It was also queried whether NVR Training could be opened to Foster Carers. The officers agreed to discuss outside of the meeting.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:

- 1. To acknowledge the progress made and actions to be completed for future direction of travel**
- 2. To explore how the number of missing episodes with young people placed in Derby City Council residential homes can be reduced.**
- 3. To ensure those looked after young people in and out of authority placements are monitored and supported appropriately.**

20/20 Adoption East Midlands – Progress Report Including Adoption Scorecard

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Children's Safeguarding. The report was presented by the Team Manager Children's Permanence Team. The report provided adoption permanence information for the period 1st April 2019 to 31 March 2020

The officer explained that the Committee had received two reports: The Annual Adoption report which was different to the report seen last year at Corporate Parenting Committee, as the children's adoption journey was the only bit that remained the responsibility of Derby City Council. The other report was the Annual report for Adoption East Midlands (AEM) which was the commissioned service for Derby City Council; the Director of Early Help and Children's Safeguarding sits on the AEM Board.

The Officer then described the structure of the team. There was a Children's Adoption Permanence Team (CAPT) which was a Pilot team set up in July 2017 as part of the transfer to AEM. All East Midland authorities had to set up an CAPT. The team consists of 2 CiC Social Workers, 2 Adoption Workers and the Team Manager. The Team was made permanent in April 2019.

The Officer then explained that in 2019-20, of the 21 children for adoption in Derby, 17 were placed with Adoption East Midland adopters in comparison to previous adoption numbers were high. Because Derby now shares adopters across East Midlands the Council can use local adopters who are based in Nottingham, Derbyshire and Nottingham City which meant there was less distance to travel to support DCC placements. There was better consistency across practice across D2N2 (the Local Enterprise Partnership for Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire), and good working relations had been developed with AEM.

The Committee were informed that the number of children placed for adoption has been consistent over the past few years. In 2017-18 there were 22, in 2018-19 there were also 22 and in 2019-20 there were 21 children placed. The officer highlighted the shortfalls in placements of children that are considered hard to place, e.g. sibling groups, BAME, children with special needs, children over school age. The AEM will make these children a priority in the coming year as this continues to be a problem.

The officer then talked about Derby City adoption data and the National scorecard. Derby's performance scorecard looks poor in relation to comparator authorities. In the aggregated period 2016-2109 Derby was worse than some other areas. However, Derby City has a few outlier cases for very hard to place children, who waited years to find a good match; those who have been found a match have now achieved a permanent placement which was a good result. The committee were informed that Derby led by good results for children rather than data. A Councillor confirmed that Derby always makes sure that we keep trying to find placement for our children, Derby does not just say no just because it is difficult to place these children, Derby do not give up.

The Officer highlighted the improvements in timescales from court agreement to placing a child for adoption and matching with prospective adopters. An analysis of

one-year has shown that Derby has more than halved the average number of days for this measure. The committee were informed that in 2017 there 408 days between placement order and finding adoptions whereas in 2019 there were 171 so a lot less than half the time was taken. Having the adoption permanence team in place has helped.

The officer described the home finding links in AEM. Derby was allocated two home finders, who produce profiles and link with other agencies outside of the AEM. They write statements and also arrange home finding events; they attend monthly tracking meetings to ensure early matches for adopter and children. They are in the process of setting up informal opportunities for Adopters and children to meet at "Adoption Activity Days; these will continue post COVID.

The officer informed the Committee about harder to place children. In 2019-20 Derby had four children who needed to be placed outside of AEM, two were part of a sibling group the other two were BAME, but no suitable matches were found. AEM are prioritising finding more adopters for hard to place children in future.

The officer explained that all Adoption Panels have moved to AEM where there are now five per month at least one per week; previously they were only once a month in Derby City. DCC can use any of five panels. All matches for DCC children continue to have ADM decisions made by the Strategic Director of Peoples Services and the Director of Early Help and Children's Safeguarding.

The officer explained how the AEM provide support after adoption. The biggest improvement was by combining all the therapeutic services available, which gave a much wider range of support for adoptions. The Adoption Support Fund continues to offer financial support and funding to enable children to quickly access assessment and therapy. Links with other permanence teams across the East Midlands are in place, they continue to meet every month, regularly share training, they are still aligning policies and practice across EM.

The officer explained that the Adoption reports only go up to March 2020, the officer gave an update since March; the difficulty has been the increase in referrals and high case workloads for CAPT Social Workers. A new Social Worker has been appointed so this will help with preparing the Children's Permanence Reports and it was hoped that by January the Team should have been able to allocate all the cases coming through proceedings.

The officer highlighted that despite lockdown 35 children have been placed this year with their adoptive parents, 21 were placed with AEM families, some larger sibling groups have established permanence with their Foster Carers, 11 children have been placed with inter agency placements in Wales, Oxfordshire and London, and in January the team will be placing a child in Dorset. Families have been found for all children that were waiting for placements, no children are waiting for adoptive families.

The officer informed the Committee that the team will have placed 50 children with families by the end of year, having more than doubled the number placed over the last three years. The officer was proud of the team who continue to work hard,

A Councillor stated that this was a remarkable performance and outcome particularly during COVID. The committee were pleased with the work and performance of the

team especially as they were always trying to find placements for those children who were hard to place. They asked that their thanks be extended to the team and hoped that the collaborative work would continue both across the Council and with the AEM.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to agree the Adoption Agency Report

21/20 Annual Fostering Report

The Committee received the annual report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services. The report was presented by the Head of Service, Fostering and provided an update of work undertaken by the Fostering Service.

The Committee were informed that most of the report was based on the period April 2019 to March 2020, but updated information has been included for this year from April 2020 to September 2020.

The officer informed the Committee about the marketing and recruiting activity that the service had undertaken. The officer stated that it had been an exciting year and one in which a different approach had been taken to the work the Fostering service does. There had been full council wide support in developing the new approach. A Corporate Fostering Recruitment Board (CFRB) had been created with a Council-wide focus to prioritise the recruitment of foster carers. The report summarised the full year of work and changes that have been achieved.

The officer explained that eighteen months ago, the CRFB was set up, it developed three work streams initially, each with a different focus. The workstreams were customer-led and informed by existing foster carers as their valuable input was welcomed. One stream was closed, as it's focus overlapped the other two, the information was pulled into the remaining two streams "Marketing and Sales" and "Pathway to Approval". In March/April of this year the marketing stream was also closed, the CFRB signed it off as complete because all the objectives had been met.

The officer stated that this had been a very busy year for the Team and that Foster Carer enquiries had improved overall. In the previous year there had been 169 enquiries in the same period, this year there were 304 enquiries which was a significant uplift. The number of information packs sent out last year for the same period was 131, this year 200 packs had been sent out. Last year 11 mainstream Foster Carers had been appointed, this year 18 have been appointed which was a significant improvement.

The officer informed the Committee that marketing for Foster Carers has become more digital and social media focused. The introduction of Google AdWords, which the Council pay for, helped to achieve an upward trend in the number of enquiries, which are being monitored so that it can be seen how enquiries are improving.

The officer then informed the Committee that a new Recruitment Strategy had been created. The previous strategy was for three years, but it was now an annual strategy. This was to enable the needs of Derby City LAC children to be continuously analysed to identify the greatest demand for Foster Carers. The

marketing strategy would then be updated to reflect the demand. Currently there was a need for Foster Carers for older children and sibling groups.

The officer then spoke about regional developments. Derby City are part of a regional programme to recruit, assess and approve foster carers who have specific interest in Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). Funding was provided by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government the programme was led by Leicestershire County Council on behalf of the East Midlands. The aim of the project was to address the shortfall of placements for UASC children across the East Midlands. The official launch of the project was 1st October 2020 this was delayed from July due to the COVID Pandemic. The overall aim of the team established for the project was to undertake recruitment and assessment work, any applicants from Derby would become carers for Derby City.

The officer then informed the Committee about retention of foster carers. A new payment for skills programme had been developed to replace the old fee payment system. The new scheme sets out a training programme that foster carers are expected to comply with. It has been put together to improve the outcomes for Derby's LAC children. The old system needed to be replaced as it was not equitable and did not value or recognise the skill base of Foster Carers fairly.

The officer explained how the IT systems were examined to look at enabling Foster Carers to use them in a more efficient way. A review was undertaken, and a complete overhaul of systems was undertaken so that it was less complicated for people making initial enquiries about becoming Foster Carers, and was a useful tool for Foster Carers in their work, giving them access to secure email, ability to update records easily and also access to their training records.

The officer highlighted the Customer Satisfaction survey, which had been completed earlier in the year; overall, there had been positive responses about Derby City Council. However, one longstanding issue had been identified, "the change and turnover of Social workers". The number of Social Workers leaving or changing was an ongoing issue for Foster Carers and children in placements. The information from the consultation had been analysed and circulated to Foster Carers in a newsletter. The CFRB had also investigated how Foster Carers could be included in Derby Perks Scheme. Work was still ongoing on this in liaison with Human Resources, but it was hoped to have a solution soon,

The officer then informed the committee about developments in the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers. The officer explained that they had contacted and worked with Derby Homes to find out if housing moves to larger properties could be arranged for newly appointed or established Foster Carers interested in supporting larger sibling groups. The Corporate Fostering Board produce and circulate a newsletter for Foster Carers which aims to show that Derby City Council was listening to what they have to say, understanding their challenges and providing the right level support and training for their needs.

The officer explained that aim of the service to change the age profile of Foster Carers had been recognised and was happening now. The new system "payment of skills" was also in place and was highlighted on the Council Website. The committee also noted that the number of deregistration's of Foster Carers was below the national average at 21. Ten of these were due to retirement, other reasons given

included Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), or because the child had moved on to a “staying put” arrangement.

The work of the team and Foster Carers during the COVID Pandemic was highlighted. A councillor recognised that the team have worked extremely well during the COVID Pandemic, even carrying out events such as Recruitment Sessions for Foster Carers online which had attracted a lot of interest.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to approve the Annual Fostering Report and Statement of Purpose

MINUTES END