

# ITEM 4

Time commenced 1.00pm

Time finished 3.15pm

## **CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

Present: Councillor Williams (Chair)  
Councillors Hezelgrave, Hussain and Kus

In attendance: Pervez Akhtar, Corporate Parenting Lead  
Laura Bradley, Children in Care Participation Officer  
Kelly Buswell, Change, Grow and Live  
Fiona Colton, Head of Service Early Help  
Priya Gill, Deputy Youth Mayor  
Joanne Groombridge, Change, Grow and Live  
Andrew Kaiser, Head of Specialist Services  
Judy Levitt, Head of Service, Fostering Service  
Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care  
Sarah McAughtrie, Derbyshire Constabulary  
Kelly Ormond, Principal Services Manager, Early Help  
Marlene Upchurch, Chair of Parent Carers Forum

### **01/21 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pattison, Councillor Lind, Andy Smith, Strategic Director People's Services, Graeme Ferguson, Headteacher for the Virtual School for LAC, Stephen Atkinson, Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Partnership, Heather Peet, Designated Nurse

### **02/21 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair**

There were none.

### **03/21 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

### **04/21 Minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### **05/21 Children in Care Council – Update**

The Board considered a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning (CYP) which was presented by the Participation Officer.

There have been 3 virtual meeting of the Children in Care Council (CICC) since the last report.

The report highlighted the work of CICC, what was important to them, and explained the challenges they face which the Corporate Parenting Committee may be able to help with.

The meeting in April was the first one for the new participation officer. The group spoke about a new drive to encourage new members to join the CICC. Discussion took place on how engagement with more young people could take place to increase numbers to the group. The Deputy HOS for Children's QA attended the meeting to present and gather feedback on the draft Diversity and Heritage pledge for LAC. The CICC discussed it and gave feedback.

In the main meeting a wellbeing and mission statement for the group was undertaken as a safety measure to ensure everyone was safe and well looked after during the meetings. The "Big Ask Survey" was discussed, the Participation Officer explained to CICC what it was about and why it was important to be involved. After the meeting a link was sent to all members, residential homes and Early Help and Social Care Managers asking them to disseminate and encourage participation with the survey. The CIC and Care Leavers Consultation was also discussed; it was due to close in February but had been extended until 31 March. The Consultation was circulated to internal and external Foster Carers, Care Leavers, DCC Children's residential homes, supported accommodation providers and young people remanded in custody. There had been 50 responses in total, 43 Children in Care, 6 Care Leavers, 1 unspecified.

At the June meeting the Participation Officer created and gave a presentation detailing the services which affect Children in Care (CIC), to generate discussion around topics that members would like to explore. The following topics were highlighted by members: Leaving Care with regards to support and Pathway Plans; Permanency of placements and a reduction in unplanned moves; Creative mentors. Plans will be put in place to cover discussion of all three topics before Christmas 2021. The CIC Pledge had been sent out the members to review before the meeting for feedback at the meeting. The CICC looked mainly at ways to raise awareness of the Pledge this included: conducting telephone questionnaires and a suggestion for a COVID secure effort to spread the word about the Pledge and CICC in public spaces. There was also discussion about holding an activity day in the summer holidays which would also be offered to CIC as a promotion of the CICC. The Committee heard that the CICC meetings from September would be held face-to-face at the Council House, at the request of CICC members.

The Committee learnt that the Participation officer had worked with the Head of Virtual School, Deputy Head of Fostering and Head of Direct Services and Children's Residential Services to look at ways to increase engagement in the CICC. From September the Participation Officer would be attending schools to meet with CIC and working together with Designated Teacher for CIC. The Committee were informed that a review would be undertaken on how members with Special Educational Needs and disabilities are consulted, to make sure their views are captured in an inclusive and effective way.

The Committee heard that the Participation officer had met with the Service Manager for Leaving Care Service to discuss how to proceed with the Care Leavers Forum. Officers from the Leaving Care Service will be attending the next CICC meeting to discuss how young people due to be leaving care would like to be consulted.

The Chair thanked the Participation Officer for the on-going good work and was pleased to see work undertaken particularly in trying to include young people with SEND. If there was any support regarding the Pledge like ideas to make it more accessible, let us know what CICC would like and the Committee will help.

A councillor asked if there was any discussion with young people about how mental health issues are dealt with, given that CIC are four times more likely to have mental health issues. The Participation Officer confirmed, although there has not been open discussion, she was keen to instigate discussion in future and would discuss with the group at the next meeting. The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care assured the committee that in terms of

consultation with young people, it forms part of all Care Planning processes and assessments that are undertaken with Social Workers. The officer drew the committees attention to a recent Ofsted inspection that was very positive, and outlined areas around Emotional Health and Wellbeing, that Ofsted had found in terms of case files, and as part of discussion with young people as normal business to ascertain the views and make an assessment of young people's emotional health and wellbeing.

The councillor then asked whether care leavers are given ways to connect with everyone, keep in touch and maintain positive control in their lives; are they given a tablet or laptop by the council to facilitate communication, looking for work, sorting out issues etc. The officer confirmed that as part of COVID Plans the Government had rolled out a scheme to distribute laptops to care leavers or care experienced young people. A number have been distributed to Care Leavers and were augmented by a communications allowance to help them maintain communication with their peers, social networks and any members of staff or professionals. The Committee heard that young people not in education, work, or training (NEETS) were not currently considered in the roll-out, but work was ongoing in this area. The councillor highlighted that there was good practice in other councils who have rolled out laptops to NEETs where it has increased engagement, strengthened communication and given autonomy. The councillor was asked to provide details of the council where this scheme had been put in place and worked, so that it could be explored by Derby City Council.

The Chair asked that the Committees thanks be passed onto the CICC for taking part in the recent Ofsted visit, the outcomes from the inspection were positive.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to consider the content of the report and feedback from CICC.**

## 06/21      Update Report on Children in Care Missing

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services which was presented by the Head of Service and Principal Services Manager, Early Help and Children's Safeguarding.

The background to the report was explained by the officer. The Committee heard that it was important to have an oversight of the most vulnerable young people who are having missing episodes. The report focuses on Looked After Children (LAC). The Strategic Authority for "missing" sits with Early Help within the Council, but the overall responsibility for missing and the protocol lies with partners also, key relationship with police. The Committee heard that there are still a lot of missing episodes from Council residential care homes, but more was known now about where young people are going. The Committee heard that the number of missing episodes between January 2021 to June were 245, 180 are for 11 young people living in DCC Residential Children's Homes; 164 of the 245 episodes related to 5 young people.

The work of the Missing Strategic Group has been focused on looking where young people are going. Seven areas have been identified across the City as Hot Spots where children missing are likely to go; these hot spots have been shared with partners, School and Community Meetings and Residential Case Management Meetings. The knowledge will support the Place Based Risk Agenda.

The Committee heard that DCC uses the DFE guidance of definition of missing but are also governed by the Policing definition of missing, which was why DCC work in such close partnership with Police colleagues. The Police breakdown risk into three levels: No Apparent Risk; Medium Risk and High Risk: The Committee heard that no child is ever deemed to be "no apparent risk", they are always "medium or high risk" in terms of trying to find them. Police rely on information from the people reporting the missing young person.

The service works with residential homes to ensure the right information is given. Any child who is looked after who is deemed at risk of exploitation (CRE) or has a significant mental health risk, will be deemed high risk status and high priority is given to find them as quickly as possible.

Information generally learnt from Return interviews was discussed. The committee heard that in general young people do not want to engage in their Return interview. When they go missing most young people travel on foot or use taxis, they often remain local, and many will go to families or congregate together in local areas. They are not often found in the place they have been whilst missing, they move around and phone to be picked up. Young People at risk of CRE will not tell you any details of whom, where and what they have been doing whilst missing. Police intelligence is used to build this picture. Other Looked After Children (LAC) often visit family members when they are reported missing, they are often missing for less than 10 hours, rarely for longer than that, but procedures are in place if they do go missing for longer.

Those at risk of CRE often go missing on their own from residential homes, compared to those not at risk who go missing together and will often go to the local parks, woods, or shops nearby. Work was being done with residential homes to manage risk, for example extending curfew times by 10 to 15 minutes, examining if this was normal child development of pushing the boundaries, or was there a need to be more concerned.

The CRE checklist was completed to a high standard and if identified the CRE pathway was being followed. However, facts and circumstances leading up to a missing episode often lack finer details like names, addresses or locations. Professional judgement and analysis of a return interview are completed to a high standard showing that workers do understand the needs of the young person. Action Plans are completed in line with the LAC and Residential Plan but there needs to be more of a focus on disruption techniques to reduce missing episodes. Return interviews are not always completed within timescales, because of the large number of missing episodes recorded for key individuals.

The officer highlighted training and development actions, which included the creation of two podcasts to provide front line workers with training on the missing protocol and how to conduct a Return Interview. Quarterly Audits are undertaken to measure the standards of Return Interviews and the impact. This information was discussed at internal meetings so that improvements can be identified and made.

In terms of reducing the number of recorded Missing Episodes in October 2021 training would be delivered to residential staff in partnership with the police on managing risk, roles and responsibilities and reporting a missing episode to the police. Early Help support was available by attending Enhanced Case Management Meetings which provide experience and advice on reducing missing episodes.

Return Interviews within Statutory Timeframes - staffing resources from Early Help and appropriate other agencies would be used to support CIC in completing return interviews for children who frequently go missing, to try and reduce the number of missing episodes.

A Councillor extended thanks to the officer and team and was reassured by the work undertaken but requested an explanation of recommendation 2.3. "to ensure those young people in out of authority placements are monitored and supported appropriately". Was this referring to young people who the service looks after from other authorities, or how children from other authorities who are living in Derby are helped. The officer confirmed it was both. The service makes certain that the right support was in place for other local authorities who place their children, in Derby and getting reciprocal support from local authorities where Derby's young people are placed. It was easier if children are placed in the East Midlands because of regional relationships; it becomes challenging if our children are placed a long

way from Derby, especially in expecting other local authorities to complete Derby's return interviews on time.

The Committee were informed that the Chair was asked to write to Chairs of Corporate Parenting committees of other local authorities where the service has placed children, to see if collaboration could be increased and if there was anything else Derby can do in terms of the "Local Offer".

Another councillor asked about teenagers who go missing and who are not co-operative on their return; are patterns examined in terms of boys and girls and how often they go missing? Are they meeting with an unknown or undetected exploiter? If patterns were found and there were concerns, would the police help, by delving into issues and using their intelligence services. Secondly can we be given reassurance that there were no organized criminal groups or individuals operating in Derby who are unknown to the police or council.

The Officer from Derbyshire Constabulary highlighted the recent change in policy which meant that any CRE will be immediately put at a high-level risk of missing, previously they were put at a medium risk. It will be down to the inspector to review that level of risk and decide if it can be lowered to medium or not, based on the circumstances of the missing episode. High risk categorization leads to a higher level of investigation. A DI will review it and CID will be allocated to carry out the investigations, in addition to the uniformed officers undertaking enquiries on the ground. As part of police review, there are a few options under consideration in terms of missing children to encourage better joint working between departments. The Committee heard that a high-risk level was hugely demanding on police resources. An officer stated that it was important to recognise that where there are concerns for young people, officers will complete the "at risk of criminal exploitation checklist" and follow the pathway in place. Monthly missing persons meeting are undertaken, anybody who has 3 or more missing episodes in 30 or 90 days are discussed and any trends and patterns for the missing episodes are examined.

A councillor asked whether young people missing are given a drugs test on their return to establish whether they have consumed or have had access to drugs or alcohol, as this would raise their risk level. The officer explained that residential home staff know their young people well, so if they have concerns these will be recorded on the social care system and fed into the social worker on the case. It was crucial that this information was collated and circulated. It was about skill in questioning, the skill of residential home staff, social workers or person who undertakes a return interview, to ask the right questions and collect data. If groups of young people are going to a certain spot, then we would find out what the facilities are in that area; police colleagues would be asked to talk to local shopkeepers. It was about the service asking the right questions at the right time to establish a picture of that young person or group of young people. The officer highlighted the work that had been done to put in place processes and procedures and to build up good relationships with police. It was explained that currently the focus was on intelligence; most of the time the service was aware where young people are going, where the hot spots are.

The Chair stated that this shows why the skills set that our staff have in terms of using different types of engagement was crucial. The Council was fortunate to have staff with those skills and fortunate in our partnerships to be able to get that information and data and use it intelligently. The Chair thanked the Committee for the questions which have pulled out reassuring information. Colleagues in the police were also thanked for giving assurance that information was being used intelligently to help give guidance and support to young people and prevent further missing episodes

An additional recommendation was suggested by a councillor and agreed by the Committee "after discussion today Committee acknowledges and appreciates the inter-agency support on this particularly from Derbyshire Constabulary"

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

- 1. to acknowledge progress made and actions to be completed**
- 2. to explore the additional actions to support the reduction in the number of missing episodes for young people placed in Derby City Council Residential Homes and Foster Care in the City**
- 3. To ensure those looked after young people in out of authority placements are monitored and supported appropriately**
- 4. To acknowledge and appreciate the inter-agency support on this particularly from Derbyshire Constabulary.**

## **07/21      Update report on reducing criminalisation by Children in Care CONCORDAT and young people involved with YOS**

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.

Update report on concordat arrangements, which are multi agency arrangements to prevent criminalisation and reduce risk for young people in care. CONCORDAT has been in place since 2018 following a pilot in two of our internal DCC residential homes in the City which has now been rolled out across all the Council's children's homes in the City.

The Concordat vision which shows custody as a last resort for CiC and LAC is still the guiding vision for multi-agency partnership around this project and programme. It is led by a tactical group, a steering group and then operationally through enhanced case management meetings so there are three levels of intervention. A range of partners are involved from Youth Offending Service (YOS), Local Authority (LA), Residential Services, police, CPS joined by other partners, virtual school, health, youth alliance and missing persons group. The Tactical group oversees the protocol and the action plan that underpins the protocol which includes the 10-point check list (work that residential staff go through before they call the police when there is an incident of behaviour/presentation by young people in a care home and operationally enhanced case management meetings which are multi- agency but focused on individual children and young people.

The Committee heard about obstacles during 2021. Two residential homes closed at one point in late 2019 – 2020, one of those homes has re-opened and the other will be re-opening shortly. The COVID 19 Pandemic and the series of national lockdowns also hampered progress. Most agencies re-trenched back to business continuity plans. In Oct 2020 a steering group took place of senior managers across the partnership re-invigorated the concordat arrangements, since then there has been engagement from all partners

The officer highlighted some of the achievements which are detailed in the report including: A relaunch of communications materials including the CONCORDAT leaflet; Missing pod cast, around best practice and return interviews; Enhanced Case Management meetings for all young people in residential homes; Police Missing Persons Unit are a part of the tactical group; Engagement from the Youth Alliance to improve social activity; Two members of staff from Kingsmead Pupil Referral Unit go into residential homes to mentor young people; during the "Mocksted" deep dive, a Concordat focus group took place; an Action plan is in place and is reviewed every eight weeks.

The Officer highlighted the Police, YOS and LA data in the report which shows some of the impact of CONCORDAT. Police data shows the changes in volumes of recorded crime which have decreased in homes 2 and 4 and increased in home 1, home 3 was closed part

of 2019-20 and all of 2020/21. The impact of CONCORDAT can be seen in the improved figures with a 67% decrease in offending in open homes.

There was a table showing the number of recorded offences in 2020 – 21 broken down by type of offence. The offences are mainly low-level violence, which was very widespread amongst these young people, and tend to be identical with the types of offences which have been seen for some time by the YOS service. A small number of young people have sexual offences which tend to be low-level and are dealt with by expertise of staff in YOS and staff in a commissioned service called Action for Children who have trained therapists to deal with that type of behaviour.

A further table shows changes in the volumes of calls for service; where residential homes have an issue, they call the police. All locations bar one home saw a reduction in calls for service, when aggregated it's around 68% in terms of reduced volume of calls (to the Police). Considering the home closures and some of those homes only being opened part of the year, it was still a good set of data which does show some impact of CONCORDAT and multi-agency arrangements.

Another table shows the number of calls for service to Derbyshire Constabulary recorded for each of the homes by type; as in most previous years the most common call was for missing children. Data from YOS shows fewer LAC involved with the YOS service and a significant reduction in the number of offences. However, the COVID context cannot be ignored in these figures, in that the reduced offending was in part due to national lockdown measures.

Qualitative data from YOS shows the type of interventions offered to LAC included a broad range of services such as mentors, fire safety, knife crime, police and health interventions. The service has developed strong relationships with police, CPS and courts and defence solicitors, and now has a triage system. Any vulnerable young people who can be dealt with outside of the court are triaged prior to their Hearing, that includes LAC children, where appropriate and proportionate that young person is diverted to the out of court disposals clinic, where a multi-agency group can make a decision about the right outcome for that young person.

DFE Data requests the number of young people who have committed an offence. A deeper dive was taken into that data and is detailed in the report. Most of the offences were low level less seriousness, involving criminal assault, criminal damage, and theft. The data shows that volumes of offending are being brought down and the levels of aggression and violence from offending by LAC children are also decreasing.

The challenges for Concordat are mainly on the ground around requests from some partner agencies to move young people out of the city or into secure accommodation when there are challenges about missing and CRE. CONCORDAT is about a trauma informed approach; we can manage risk far better locally than 100 or 200 miles away. Conversations take place in tactical groups, all partner members are signed up to keeping young people local and to managing risk locally and keeping good communication channels open. There are some risks associated with funding around the YOS clinical psychologist and Youth Wellbeing worker, but this is on the Agenda of the Youth Justice Partnership Board and conversations are taking place in Clinical Commissioning Group CCG as to whether funding can be extended after October 2022.

Next Steps: the service want to roll out CONCORDAT to private children's homes in the City. The service is developing the CROMARTY model which allows outcome measures aligned to Health, Education, Emotional well-being as well as behavioural presentation. The model has been used in the Virtual Schools to good effect; Home's managers will attend Police Section Tasking meetings and ensure information is fed back to staff in homes to ensure they are aware of key risk locations and individuals; assessing any gaps in existing provision for psychological and therapeutic services INC the contract with Action for Children

to assess what gaps there are. Free consultation with NHS about how to develop trauma informed practice in the City; The Virtual school have retendered their mentoring support service with a new provider.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and stated that bearing in mind the caveats on the data it was good to see the reduction in numbers and seriousness of presentation and the reduction in violence related cases with LAC, and really pleased to see that more work is going ahead with the trauma informed practices, which was having a real impact, and in terms of the clinical psychologist funding we need to look at with our strategic partners. The Chair was happy with the impact the CONCORDAT was having and the work and training ongoing will have an increased impact on children and young people.

The officer drew attention to the exemplary partnership working in this particular framework, Derby is leading the way nationally. The Youth Justice Board who oversees the YOS have recognized this as good practice nationally and have highlighted this on their website as good practice to follow. The Chair agreed it was good to hear and hoped that other authorities would draw on the experience.

A councillor was concerned that two important team members could be lost and suggested there should be a recommendation such that we would be very concerned those two posts would be lost. The councillor also suggested that there should be a recommendation to recognise the collaborative work to keep our young people from being criminalized from the CPS and Derbyshire Constabulary.

A councillor was concerned about the extension of CONCORDAT to private homes and asked if it might be a challenge to get them to sign up. It was suggested that it be made a condition on the private homes to sign up to the CONCORDAT before placing any children in these homes. The Chair agreed in principle with what was said but was concerned that this would have a detrimental impact on placement sufficiency, but the service can try and address issues with private homes. The officer highlighted that there was not a statutory obligation for private homes to take CONCORDAT on board, the service can commit to having the conversation and to be selling the benefits of CONCORDAT for that home, that could be done bearing in mind the comments about placement sufficiency.

The councillor explained that there was a system in place for adults and people with disabilities homes must agree our terms and conditions when taking placements. The councillor asked if the service had no terms or conditions in place in homes, we place our LAC. The Chair understood the concerns raised; however, we will have ongoing discussions with providers, but it should not be a legal contract of joining CONCORDAT in terms of commissioning those places. I think the way forward would be the ongoing discussions, the market was flooded, and it was difficult now to make placements. The councillor agreed the direction of travel.

**The Committee resolved:**

- 1. The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to be kept abreast of development and progress regarding CONCORDAT to date**
- 2. To recognise the collaborative work that's ongoing with all our agencies and the team.**
- 3. To express concern over the loss of the YOS clinical psychologist and Youth Well-being worker posts**
- 4. To continue to have ongoing discussions with the private providers on CONCORDAT**



## 08/21 Children's Rights Service Annual Report

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care. The report was presented by officers from Change, Grow and Live (CGL).

The officers highlighted that (CGL) had been successful in retaining the contract for a further three years. There was a statutory requirement to provide a children's rights services for children in care.

The committee heard that an Independent Visitor (IV) is that consistent individual who is independent and follows a young person whilst in care; they meet children monthly go out and undertake activities with the young people. The young people have that one person that they can talk to, communicate, and get a relationship with, so that they have that consistent person in their life if there are no other family members or if they are feeling isolated, all alone.

The committee heard that of thirteen young people referred to the service during 2020-21, twelve young people were newly matched with an Independent Visitor. At the end of the year there were eight ongoing relationships. There are twenty-eight relationships in total both in Derby (12) and out of area (16). Six referrals were withdrawn due to a change in circumstances, 14 matches ended in the year, higher than normal due to COVID and lockdown, 12 were awaiting matching at the end of the year

The committee heard it had been a challenging time. The service had to change and adapt the way their service provision around recruiting volunteers, training, interviewing, and matching and maintaining existing matches. The service saw this a business as usual, trying to continue without disruption. The different ways of working included using technology, writing letters. Training was undertaken throughout the Pandemic in smaller groups. Some of the activities undertaken included writing letters and cards, doorstep deliveries, food parcels, virtual movie nights with treats in advance, pamper nights, jewellery nights. As restrictions eased, they had socially distanced bike rides, walks in the parks, visiting nature reserves, picnics.

An update was also given on the Advocacy provision; the committee heard that young people could refer to CGL as well as Foster Carers and Social Workers. The service works with children helping them with issues they have, anything that young people feel that they need an advocate to speak on their behalf and get things moving. They attend initial Child Protection Conferences and Reviews, gather children's feelings, and wishes and present them with that young person. This has been done virtually over the last 18 months, but it has been challenging being better to meet face to face and gather views that way.

The committee heard that there were 85 young people referred to the service last year, 52 in Derby and 33 out of area; 43 visits to residential homes or via teams meetings were completed; 81 matters were raised by young people, 77 of these were closed, and 31 cases had been closed. The number of Referrals for Child Protection Advocacy were 42 and the number of conferences participated in was 46

The Chair thanked the officers for working with young people, being there for them and for dealing with the challenges faced over the last 18 months in working out ways to keep that advocacy going

**The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report.**

## 09/21 Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services which was presented by the Deputy Head of Quality Assurance. The Officer explained that it was a Statutory requirement for the manager of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service to write an annual report outlining the activity of the IRO service over the year, also guidance that the report is presented to the CP committee for scrutiny.

This was a detailed report for the IRO Service over the year. The IRO is a statutory role which was embedded into the Children and Adoption Act 2002. Every child coming into care was required to have an IRO officer, the requirement is IRO is allocated within 5 days, in addition to a Social Worker for a child. The IRO has two main functions, to chair statutory reviews which have specific time scales, within 20 days of child coming into care then 3 months and 6 months thereafter for the period that a child is in care. The other duty was for the IRO to monitor the care of the young person whilst they are in care.

The officer highlighted key successes that the IRO service have had over 2020-21

- Continued to undertake reviews as per statutory requirement but these have been virtual
- Over the year increased complement by one IRO
- There have been an increasing number of young people in care. There has been a national increase in children coming into care. In Derby consistent theme over many, unaccompanied young asylum seekers (UASC), issues to do with population, the number of children in care continue to increase, the capacity of IROs must increase to meet that demand.
- Caseload is higher than government guidance states, the service has agreement to recruit an additional IRO and it was hoped that the additional member of staff would bring caseloads down

Measures for effectiveness were explained; one of which timeliness of reviews. The IRO service was very effective in 2021 and had undertaken 99% of reviews on time which was a significant increase from last year which was 92%. It was the highest percentage of timely reviews the service had had.

Another measure was participation in reviews by young people which was 99.5% 2020-21. The young people gave their views at reviews, explained what was working well for them, and talked about their care plans.

In the last 6 months the IRO service has focused on writing reports in a child centred away, in effect writing review reports to the young person so they can understand why they are in care, what the main issues are for them and what's going to be done to address those issues. This had been received well, the service had good feedback from young people and Foster Carers. There had been a focused visit from Ofsted. Their feedback was encouraging liking the way reports were being written, pleased at how reviews were chaired, and the consistency of IROs, and were, generally pleased about the effectiveness of the IRO service.

The Chair thanked the officer, commended the way the IROs report writing has changed and would like to see all council reports written in that format.

An officer drew the committee's attention to the picture on the front of the report which a very talented young person had designed.

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

## 10/21 Adoption Agency Report 2020-21

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services which was presented by the Director of Early Help and Children's Safeguarding. The report provided adoption performance information for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The officer explained that it was a Statutory requirement to have an adoption report, the local authority was required, under several different pieces of legislation to provide an adoption service. This was spilt in 2019 in terms of the adult part of adoption services, with the creation and collaboration work with Nottingham, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire of the Adoption East Midlands, and they oversee the adoption matching, the recruitment of adopters and the subsequent report.

Today's report was concentrating on children for which the local authority still maintains its existing responsibility. The report covers the Children's Permanence Team, timescales, and performance of our Adoption Scorecard.

The role of agency decision maker was whether a young person should be considered for adoption and all matches for adoption was retained by Derby. There are two in place, the Strategic Director for Peoples Services and the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care.

The officer highlighted the young person's summary. There have been significant number of adoptions this year 31, last year there were 19 adoptions, this shows the impact of adoption and pace we have had on adoption. The committee were asked to note COVID has not necessarily affected that. A further 46 adoptions took place where we considered it was in the best interest of those children to be adopted in comparison to the previous year when there were 37 adoptions. There were 52 matches and there was an equal balance of girls and boys, 42 of adopters were recruited by Adoption East Midlands there had been 21 adopters recruited the previous year. At the end of year there were 32 children living with forever families comparedn to 15 the year before.

The supporting information section of the report provides a detailed breakdown of the adoptions age and data that we are required to submit to central government, we have performed overall very well.

Indicator A7 shows children adopted over 5 years old, which becomes harder the older a child gets age increases; the average over a three-year period was 22%, last year it was 25.8% both percentages are above comparator and national averages which was a good outcome for children.

Indicator A6 gives percentage of children adopted from black and ethnic minority heritages, these accounted for half of our adoptions in 2021 which was above national average but averaged out over three years we remain lower than regional and comparators. Last year was very low with only 3 out of 19 who came from a BAME heritage (15%).

Regarding the timeliness of children entering care and being placed with adoptive family, the timescale has increased slight by 29 days, but if you look over the number of years we have

been steadily improving and we expect to maintain and be in line or below our comparators at national average when that data becomes available. Indicator A2 shows the positive performance in terms of Adoption East Midlands matching and placing timescales.

In conclusion the officer stated there were no concerns to highlight to the Corporate Parenting Committee. This has been a positive year despite COVID and the service was looking forward to another fruitful year ahead.

The Chair noted the impact of Adoption East Midlands

### **The Corporate Parenting Committee approved the report**

## **11/21      Annual Fostering Report**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services which was presented by the Head of Service, Fostering Service.

The Board heard that during the year from April 2020 – March 2021 Derby City Council (DCC) maintained a similar number of approvals for foster carers as they would have done had they not been in lockdown; there were challenges, but all assessments and panels continued virtually during lockdown. Twenty-four new fostering households were approved, there were twenty-one de-registrations, so there was a net gain of three foster carers which was against the national trend in lockdown as most local authorities have had a loss.

The service has recently focused on using the skills of the foster carers that DCC has. This had a dramatic impact over the year. At the start of the year, there were eighty-three placements that we could offer from existing DCC carers; by the end of the year there were one hundred and four. Existing carers were able to offer care for a wider age range and for more children at the same time. This was because the approval status for DCC foster carers had been relaxed. In the past DCC had tight approval ranges such as 0-3 or 11- 16 years but carers had been encouraged to extend their approval range from 0-18 years. They were also encouraged to foster more children. Another idea was to set up a Parent and Child scheme from the existing pool of Foster Carers, additional training was put in place so that foster carers could be approved to take parent and children together. In the past all parent and child placements had to be with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), but DCC now has approximately ten foster carers who in the future would be able to offer that placement, they are coming through Panel in the next few months. Another benefit was that parents and children can be kept in the local area close to their family networks.

The Committee heard about the Payment for Skills Panel where foster carers are paid for their knowledge and skills rather than the child in placement. Virtual Training was offered to foster carers, which was easier for them to access. Going forward, training will be more hybrid, both face to face and virtual. DCC foster carers are moving through bands, carers on higher band levels such as C and D are now comparable with payments for IFA foster carers, DCC was getting more enquiries from carers currently with IFAs who want to move to the local authority.

Another major change was the restructure of the Fostering Service to form a new Family and Friends team. In the past the Recruitment and Assessment team undertook all assessing, both from mainstream and family and friends, but there were now more enquiries from family and friends which need to be responded to straight away; they benefit from having the same social worker who initially assessed them supporting them in future. Specific training will be provided for family and friends. The scheme began in June 2021, additional funding provided for two new social workers in the team, and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) support has moved over to that team.

The service currently was working closely with Derbyshire, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire to look at ways of collaboration, this was a work in progress but DCC was moving on, looking to become a Foster Friendly Council so that they could advertise as being committed to supporting foster carers in their fostering journey. DCC was also looking at delivering skills to foster carers across D2N2, as well as potential recruitment events to encourage people to foster for the local authority.

One of the developments from “Mocksted” was the need to strengthen the voice of the child through better compliance and feedback from social workers in the annual reviews of foster carers. The service had created easier forms to complete and put in place different systems for follow up, so that for annual reviews there would be feedback from a child’s social worker and therefore the voice of the child in how they found that placement. There was a new in-house placement officer in post who works closely with in house fostering and will be on duty every day so will have more information about availability of foster carers and will also build links with them.

Support care proceedings and locality services through streamlined system for assessing kinship carers: Currently Special Guardianship Orders assessments by our localities and family and friends are completed by the fostering service but going forward the new family and friends team will do both SGOs and family and friends assessments.

The service was widening recruitment events to reach a more diverse group of carers by working with the officer for refugee communities to put on a special event at the end of September looking at other ways to reach a more diverse group of carers.

The Chair thanked the officer for all the work undertaken she was pleased to see a lot of the new initiatives in place, such as training and schedules being more flexible in terms of hybrid training scheme, which meant that foster carers could undertake more training to meet the higher levels. Looking at the dashboard, it was pleasing to see the number of IFAs coming down, that DCC foster carer numbers are rising and that local carers were being used more as this was a massive impact on children and families. Data sets were really pleasing and there was lots of work ongoing with the wider recruitment. It had been a struggle over the past few years to find new ideas and ways of working.

A councillor stated that it was nice to hear a good news story, there was certainly an improvement in that more people are linked to authority in terms of providing foster care, which enables children in care to stay local to city and keeps costs down. It was good that foster carers are paid by knowledge and skills rather than number of children as this makes it a better for the young person placed with foster carers.

**The Corporate Parenting Committee approved the Fostering Agency Report and Statement of Purpose**

MINUTES END