

Time commenced 1.00pm

Time finished 3:05pm

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Tuesday 25 July 2023

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

In attendance: Pervez Akhtar, Corporate Parenting Lead
Laura Bradley, CiC Council, Participation Officer
Ranjit Dol, Superintendent Derbyshire Police
Holly Hardgrave, Commissioning Support Assistant
Harman Kaur, Deputy Youth Mayor
Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help & Children's Social Care
Catherine O'Melia, Head of Children's Quality Assurance
Muhammad Muntasir, Youth Mayor
Mandy MacDonald, Child Protection Manager
Maria Murphy, Director of Derby Homes
Peter McCauley, Team Manager Early Help & Children's Safeguarding
Heather Peet, Designated Nurse CiC NHS
Andy Smith, Strategic Director Peoples Services
Sarah Walker, Improvement & Quality Assurance Manager

01/23 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from, Councillor Lonsdale, Steve Atkinson, Independent Chair Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Childrens Partnership, Kelly Ormond Principal Services Manager, Marlene Upchurch, Chair of Parent Foster Carers.

02/23 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were none.

03/23 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Whitby declared he was a Foster Carer for Derby City Council.

04/23 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 04 April 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

05/23 Children in Care Council (CiCC) Update

The Committee received a report from the Director of Integrated Commissioning. The report was presented by the CiC Participation Officer (PO) and highlighted issues discussed by the CiCC during meetings in the previous quarter, guests, participation opportunities, numbers of young people engaging, and impact made. The report ensured that the Committee was sighted on activity and enabled them to set direction where needed.

There were two meetings of the Our Voice, Our Success (OvOs) this quarter but there was no report on the later meeting due to deadline issues. The May meeting was held at Derby

Arena, it was a design session for the newsletter. The CICC were asked what they would like to see in the upcoming newsletter and how it should be distributed. The young people gave their feedback, and felt that Social Workers and Carers should have access to the newsletter. They agreed a newsletter would be useful for members to inform everyone about events and items to discuss. It could also be used to promote membership of the CICC and show different sides of CICC, other than the formal meetings. The PO was working with Communications regarding a design for the newsletter for the young people to approve. It was planned to have a mini editors group but there were limitations due the lack of young people attending CICC meetings.

One member suggested that having virtual meetings, in addition to face-to-face meetings, as some young people would prefer this. The Participation Officer agreed to plan for a future meeting in September virtually on MS Teams.

The PO then highlighted the various activities undertaken by the CICC which included:

A **Virtual School Cookery Event** with an opportunity to promote the work of the CICC. The CICC will continue to attend events to ensure wider promotion of the CICC

Two young people from CICC had been invited to be a part of the **Small Children's Homes Interiors Project**, to help select soft furnishings for the home being developed in Allestree. They met with the Provider and gave their input to help choose appropriate interiors and furnishings for a comfortable home environment. The opportunity helped them to build their independence skills. The PO was keen to ensure there are more opportunities of this nature to help young people develop their skills and knowledge and offer activities for all interests.

The PO has developed a cluster event/ambassador model of **School Participation** for schools to come together in a group, with representation from each of them to give wider opportunity and formats for young people to engage with participation work. Derby City Secondary Schools were invited to attend a launch/information event at the Museum of Making on 4 July 2023, but unfortunately, the event was cancelled shortly before it was due to take place. However, several schools expressed an interest in attending future School Participation Meetings, and one is planned for September 2023.

As part of **Residential Participation**, the PO visited Derby City Residential Homes in April and June 2023. The April visit focused on the Residential Children's Guide which was under review. Young People were asked for their feedback which was passed to the Principal Officer for Early Help and Social Care to discuss with Residential Managers. The focus of the June visit was the newsletter and what young people would like to see included in future. The young people provided feedback to be included in the wider consultation. The PO reported that there were small numbers of young people seen on these visits and there were still challenges to achieving consistent engagement, but work was ongoing to develop appropriate methods of consultation.

The PO explained the work undertaken with the CYP Participation Officer during 2022/23 for **Participation Evidence**. The PO CiC had overseen services which supported CiC and Care Leavers and assisted in gathering evidence for staff members. The aim was to provide evidence that DCC listened to the voices of CYP, and captured their involvement and that of parents and carers in the decision-making processes. The collection of participation evidence was now open for the year of 2022-23.

A group called "**Young Recruiters**" has been set up to give young people an opportunity to have recruitment training with materials from DCC Human Resources. The young people could then be a part of the recruitment process of employees who support CiC. A training session for young people has been set up in August 2023. All services who employ staff that support CiC are encouraged to involve the Young Recruiters group in the interview process where possible. The committee asked if it would be possible to provide a voucher in

recognition of the involvement of young people in recruitment processes. The officer agreed to investigate this.

The PO provided a **Care Leavers Update**. An invitation was extended for a Care Leaver to take part in the interview process for a new post in the NHS of a Trauma Navigator. The interviews took place in June, two care leavers took part and feedback from the Designated Nurse for CiC was very positive, with their thoughts and contributions valued.

The Committee noted the report and feedback from Children in Care Council, they supported the work being done by the Participation Officer with involving children and young people from CiCC in any recruitment processes relevant to them.

06/23 Update Report on Children in Care Missing

The Chair agreed to defer this item to the October meeting of the Committee.

07/22 CRE and Children in Care

The Committee received a report and presentation of the Director of Early Help and Childrens Social Care. The report was presented by the Child Protection Manager and provided an overview of types of exploitation, level of risk, diversity, and gender breakdown of Children Looked After (CLA) cases referred for child exploitation meetings. The report also provided the Committee with an overview of the services, partnership, campaign, and awareness work.

The officer reported that on 31 March 2023 32 CLA children were under review for child exploitation concerns. At year end, 5 were assessed being at high risk of exploitation, 9 were at medium risk and 18 were at low risk (included closed cases). A thematic breakdown of this data was provided in the presentation.

- Of the 32 cases CLA worked in 2022/23, 3 were new cases and 29 were pre-existing cases
- CE Annual Data 22/23 - There was a decrease in CE referrals annually, from 237 in 21/22 to 202 in 22/23. 19% of children on the CE strategy are CLA
- The Gender gap was reducing in the first quarter of 23/24 but was quite similar in annual figures over the 2-year comparison 125/74 male to female compared to 148 to 89 male to female.

The report provided examples of the support provided and partnership initiative to safeguard. There were no additional costs to DCC in respect of the partnership work.

- Specialist support through contracted services, such as Catch 22 and Safe & Sound provided tailored help to children who meet a low to high-risk threshold. Children are also supported by keyworkers, parents, and other partners.
- High risk cases have independent reviews which are chaired by a child protection manager. The serious and organised crime and exploitation tactical sub-group (SocEx) oversee high risk cases and area-based risks. These are considered by the Serious Youth Violence subgroup also. Disruption, pursue and prosecution strategies are created through SocEx meetings.

CRE Strategy Improvements were described, there are plans which focus on Welfare and Prevention.

- The welfare approach uses prevention work, awareness raising, protection of children through early help, social care and supporting the child and family directly.

- Disruption and Pursue approaches are carried out by agencies not working directly with the child, such as the Police. They focus on persons, places, community, or online spaces that pose a risk to children. The arrangements help to structure, support, and enable partnerships to work together to tackle harm inside and outside of the home.
- Research and practice updates are sent monthly to all managers. With resources to educate staff, parents, children, and the wider partnership about emerging national trends.
- A cross border, multi-agency audit of criminal exploitation was completed hosted by the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (DDSCP). It highlighted good practice in the multi-agency use of CE tools and assessments.
- Operation Keep Safe was conducted with Derbyshire Police and CE Leads. It focused on test purchases in hotels. It was an extension of the “Say Something if you See Something Campaign”. Concerns were highlighted about hotel safeguarding practice, and training was offered to the hotel sector.
- Online child exploitation (abuse) training was delivered virtually across Derby and Derbyshire and was accessed by children’s home staff. The officer indicated that the offer of online child exploitation training could be made available to committee members. The Modern slavery training had been updated also.
- CRE Training as updated and there are now podcasts and learning packs only. They give a basis understanding of exploitation.
- Free training events were launched to make sure the cyber choices toolkit was used by practitioners when working with children.

The Committee noted the report and accepted the offer of updated child exploitation training for committee members.

08/23 Update report on Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) – Specialist Team/Children in Care Service

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Childrens Social Care which was presented by the Team Manager Early Help & Childrens Safeguarding. The report was to provide the Committee with an update on UASC outcomes and the progress of the Specialist Migration Team. The report also included an update on recent developments in Government Policy which could affect future planning, support, and care of UASC.

The officer highlighted areas of the work of the Specialist Migration Team. The number of referrals received for accommodation/age dispute between April 2022 to March 2023 were reported as 42, and the number of young people accommodated as LAC as 37. Since January 2022 Derby was a part of the Mandated National Transfer Scheme (NTS) under Section 72(5) of the Immigration Act 2016. Since June 2023 Derby had received 25 LAC by this scheme; it was the main way UASC enter DCCs Care.

The **challenges** of the Teams work included:

- The unpredictability of referrals, which meant significant resources in terms of social worker time to ensure children are appropriately safeguarded.

- There was a need to accommodate UASC as a LAC with very little information to base placement decisions on. This caused difficulties in understanding and managing any risk for these young people.
- There was a legal challenge around age enquiries; age assessments are a lengthy process and took up a lot of social worker time. However, DCC had not lost any legal challenge since the Specialist Migration Team was formed.
- There was an increase across the UK of the arrival of Albanian children and young people through illegal entry and trafficking routes.

The officer described Team Development and Network Building areas:

- The team was strong and dedicated. Quarterly UASC update meetings have been set up with the Designated LAC Nurse and Virtual Headteacher to ensure strengths and needs of UASC are mapped and resources reach the right places.
- A key part of the team's work was building social networks of support for UASC young people. Social workers alongside placement providers undertake a vital role to integrate young people into the local community.
- The Prince's Trust were contacted to see if a specific UASC programme could be developed as current programmes do not fit their needs.
- The "No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Connect" was now used and was proving to be a useful tool as LAs can liaise directly with the Home Officer to check a young person's details.

The officer then described other areas of work undertaken with the UASC which included, Safeguarding, Physical and Emotional Health, Education, Transition into Leaving Care Services, Accommodation, Asylum Claims and Home Office Financing, Feedback from UASC.

Other possible UASC issues were highlighted by officers and committee members commented, asked questions and requested information.

The number of **single young men as UASC** coming to Derby was likely to increase in the future. Under the national transfer system DCC receives a quota this was likely to be reviewed and councils could have to take more UASC. A committee member was concerned that the UASC would be single young men rather than families and children. The officer explained there were ongoing meetings about the general approach, and how it would impact Derby.

The implications of **the Illegal Migration Bill** which clashed with the Children Act 2004. The Bill if passed would undermine the efforts to safeguard children who have arrived in the UK, including those trafficked or exploited. The Bill does not change the LAs duties under the Children Act but would make it harder to ensure UASC children are appropriately cared for and safeguarded. The Committee asked if there was any legal advice about the Bill, and if it would be shared with them. The officer explained that the Local Government Association (LGA) and Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) were considering the position and whether to take legal advice on the implications of the Bill. There was need of a national position as the Children's Act was superseded by the Illegal Migration Bill.

Committee members also asked about numbers of **UASC missing** and if there was any data available to compare past and present. The officer offered to provide this data. The committee **asked what percentage of UASC had physical and emotional health issues**. Officers described common issues which included sleeping problems, flashbacks, physical injuries, infectious diseases. The Designated Nurse offered to share a report of the health

needs of UASC on arrival to Derby and reported there was a lack of specialist therapy available to support UASC.

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report and thanked the Specialist Migration Team for all the work they were doing.

09/23 Independent Reviewing Service – Annual Report 2022-23

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

The officer reported that, as part of the IRO Handbook 2010 statutory guidance, the IRO manager must prepare an Annual Report for scrutiny of this Committee so they are aware of the performance of the IRO Services and any issues that may be impacting on CiC.

Every child that comes into care must be allocated an IRO, who has a statutory responsibility to chair the statutory review and make sure the council considers the child's wishes and feelings, and that their Care Plan is right for the child.

The first review of a child's case should be within 20 working days of the date on which the child becomes looked after; the second review no more than three months after the first; the third and subsequent reviews no more than six months after the previous one.

Statutory Guidance recommended that every IRO caseload should ideally be between 50-70 cases. In 2022-23 the average caseload for IROs in DCC was 71, this was good in comparison with other local authorities. The service had grown over last year from 4 to 5 IROs. With the appointment of another IRO, it was expected that cases would reduce slightly. There were also two posts of 0.5 hours each dealing with Short Breaks and Children with Disabilities respectively.

IROs are a busy service, in 2022/23 a lot of time was spent travelling and chairing virtual meetings. They worked closely with social workers and others to ensure the views of young people were heard. Many young people were involved in their meetings and 97.7% of reviews were held on time, above the target of 97%. Also, 97.2% of all reviews had children and young people participating in them. The process of feedback was now electronic. The feedback from forms indicated that young people and parents were positive about the review process.

The IRO service comprised a stable and experienced team. It had maintained and built good working partnerships with social workers and team managers in social care as well as external partners. The service worked over the last year to ensure the voices, wishes and feelings of young people in care were reflected in their care plans.

A committee member queried the number of cases each IRO had responsibility for as 71 seemed too high. The officer explained that whilst Social Workers had the responsibility for the day-to-day care of CiC, an IRO had a specialist role of overseeing the communications with the young person and the social worker. The committee member asked what number of cases DCC should be aiming for. The officer explained it was generally between 69 to 70 but was dependent on the number of children in care. The figure provided of 71 cases per IRO was when there was a vacant post in the service.

The Committee noted the report and thanked the IROs for all their hard work.

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report.

10/23 Annual Performance Update – Children in Care and Care Leavers 2022/23

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care which was presented by the Improvement and Quality Assurance Manager. The report presented the latest provisional performance highlights in the context of national information (Appendix 1)

The officer reported that each year all local authorities submit statistics to the Department for Education (DfE) on the children they look after. The information was collated centrally and published annually to enable comparison between authorities and to inform local understanding of the profile, demand, and performance in relation to key children in care performance indicators.

The committee noted that at the end of March 2023 Derby had 620 children in care, this was a small decrease from March 2022 when there were 627 children in care. It was the second decline in the total number of children in care seen over the past five financial years.

Between April 2022 and March 2023 Derby had 232 children who ceased to be looked after. The rate of children per 10,000 who ceased to be looked after decreased from 42 per 10,000 in 2021/22 to 38 per 10,000 in 2022/23. It remained higher than both national and comparator averages.

The highest percentage of CiC are placed in a foster care placement (71.1%). In the last 12 months the total number of DCC mainstream foster carers has stayed at 110. This and a more creative use of the places available meant there was a fall in Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Placements from 76.2% in June 2020 to 65% at the end of March 2023.

There has been a decline in the number of young people in Derby benefitting from stable placements from 73.1% to 61.8% in this financial year. Derby was now below comparator and national averages of 71% in this area.

A Committee member expressed concern at the decline in number of stable placements. The officer explained there was a national placement crisis. Trying to achieve suitable and matched placements for CiC was challenging, placements might not meet all a child's needs. Also, there were fewer foster carers available who had tolerance for managing complex needs of children, especially in the external market. Cabinet had agreed that a Performance Surgery should be scheduled for 2023/24 to try and understand why there had been a fall in stable placements. It was aimed to set up the Performance Surgery for September/October 2023.

Another committee member asked about strength and difficulties questionnaire scores, what they mean. The Designated Nurse explained they are a measure of behavioural and emotional difficulties that can be used to assess mental health problems in children and young people. It was explained that the average score has always been high in Derby and was above the national average. A child in an external (IFA) placement often scores higher than those placed with internal foster carers.

The areas of strength of performance for CiC and Care Leavers in Derby were highlighted.

A higher percentage of Derby City children looked after, are cared for by **Foster Carers** than that national average.

Based on provisional data for 2022/23 performance on **health outcomes** for Derby's children in care was good. Children and Young People benefit from up-to-date health assessments, timely immunisations and up to date dental checks, all of which are higher than national averages.

Outcomes for care leavers were strong, many were in suitable accommodation and engaged in employment, education, or training, with regular contact with Personal Advisers.

The number of young people convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand during the year stayed at 12, following an increase last year. This was still higher than the national average but showed stabilization. Turnaround Project will be targeted to stop young people moving into the Youth Justice System.

Missing incidents or young people being away from their placement without authorisation are in line with the national average. 10.5% of all CiC had one or more missing occurrences, compared to 2021/22 national of 11% and comparator authority average of 10%.

The areas for development were also highlighted.

Stability of Placements has declined with fewer children and young people benefitting from stability of placement for more than 2 to 5 years and more having multiple placement moves.

Sufficiency challenges are ongoing for placements, this was made worse by the small boundary of the city meaning fewer young people are placed in the city or within a 20mile radius.

The **average score** for young people eligible for completing a **strength and difficulties questionnaire** was still above the national and comparator averages at 15.3.

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report.

MINUTES END