

Time Commenced: - 6.00 pm
Time Finished: - 7.15 pm

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMISSION TUESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2004

Present: Councillor Hussain (in the Chair)
Councillors Jones, MacDonald, Turner, Webb and Winter

In attendance: Councillor E Berry

01/04 Appointment of Chair

Resolved to appoint Councillor Hussain as Chair of the Sub-Commission for the 2004/05 civic year.

02/04 Appointment of Vice Chair

Resolved to appoint Councillor Jones as Vice Chair of the Sub-Commission for the 2004/05 civic year.

03/04 Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

04/04 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

05/04 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

06/04 Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Joint Sub-Commission

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

07/04 Participation and Consultation of Children and Young People

The Sub-Commission considered a report from the Director of Social Services, that set out the progress of the Participation Project Officer with children and young people in Derby. Naomi Feldman, Participation Project Officer, reported that she had been in post since May 2003. It was reported that participation work ranged from activities to increase

children / young peoples' involvement in individual care planning to their participation in more public activities, such as reference groups or attendance at partnership events. Naomi reported that nine young people had now been trained to be trainers for total respect.

It was noted that there were three reference groups for children looked after, including:

- the KICK Group (Kids In Care in Kontrol) – that meets once a month at The Space and offers consultancy on practice issues or policy development
- the Connectors – a group for children aged 12 years and below

It was hoped that in the future young people would be involved in recruitment and selection of staff, for example, social workers. This had already happened for the advocacy project and the KICK Group, where young people had provided questions for the recruitment of social workers. The aim was to develop a group of young people who are trained and supported to be members of interview panels and integrated into the recruitment and selection process for some posts. This was a recommendation within the Warner report.

Councillor Hussain raised concern that the legal aspects and procedures of involved in recruitment and selection and considered that it would be helpful if difficulties that may arise could be listed so that the pros and cons of the project could be weighed up.

Naomi Feldman responded that one of the difficulties that might arise from the project, would be if there was a complaint from an applicant who considered they had not been treated fairly. However, she considered that the exercise would be beneficial to the young people.

Councillor Webb asked if the young people would be participating in the interviews or observing.

Keith Woodthorpe responded that it would be of value having the young peoples' contribution, not just as a token exercise and would be a good vehicle of seeking views on applicants.

It was reported that there was a possibility of training young people to conduct exit interviews with people leaving care in order to gain their views on a placement, as it was hoped that this would give them more of an opportunity to say what they may have kept to themselves.

Resolved to note the progress of the work of the Participation Project Officer with children and young people in Derby.

08/04 A Day in the Life of a Children's Home

Brendan from Moorfield Care Home attended the Sub-Commission meeting and gave the Commission details of what a typical day in his life entailed. He reported that he was undertaking an NVQ2 in Business at Derby College. He was in receipt of a free bus pass and was allowed £2.50 for his lunch every day. He would go home to Moorfield at 6.30pm most days after meeting his friends after college. He considered that staff at Moorfield were very supportive and always attended all meetings where necessary.

Rob Noble, who was a member of staff at Queensferry Gardens reported on a typical day for the children in care at the home. He reported that Queensferry was a medium to long term home that was currently looking after six young people, some of whom had been there for up to seven years. He reported that after school, the young peoples' files were updated and staff would often ring the schools to see if there had been any problems and find out how their day had gone.

Staff that started at 7am would change over to evening staff at 2pm and would give them a full run down on each young person during the last 24 hours. He reported that each young person had two key workers responsible for updating their files which were audited every month. These key workers and staff had been educated to help the young people with their homework.

Councillor Winter asked how discipline was enforced.

Rob responded that discipline for the young people was quick, out of the way and achievable, for example, early bed times or with-holding pocket money, so no long sanctions were imposed.

Councillor Jones asked what activities were undertaken with the young people when they were not at school.

Rob responded that as many of the children were 16 – 18 years old, they spent more time with their friends, but previously, the workers would take them to youth clubs, swimming or abseiling and have been on holiday to Spain.

Councillor Turner asked how peer groups of the young children were influenced.

Rob responded that young people had set times to be back into the home and were also asked where they were going when they go out. If they were putting themselves into danger staff could, in extreme circumstances, stop them from going out.

09/04 Looked After Children and Admissions to Schools

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Education that set out details of children looked after gaining admissions to schools. Cathy Ford reported that DfES had changed their Code of Practice two years ago, to state that children looked after should have priority into over subscribed schools. She reported that there had been some resistance from schools including St Peters and Woodlands, but any that didn't comply with making children looked after top of the over subscribed list were taken to the schools' adjudicators. It was noted that Ecclesbourne School had not placed children looked after top of the over subscription list and have therefore been adjudicated and the objection had been upheld.

Resolved to note the report.

10/04 Inspection of Children's Services

The Sub-Commission considered a report from the Director of Social Services that set out details of an inspection being undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection of Children's Services (Social Services).

It was reported that the Commission for Social Care Inspection was established in April 2004, replacing the National Care Standards Commission, as the new Independent Inspectorate for Social Care.

It was considered that the objectives of the inspection were to contribute to the Commission's overall evaluation of the extent to which Social Services department's policy, strategy, management and practice, address the national objectives for Social Services, the National Priorities Guidances and the Performance Assessment Framework. It was reported that the inspectorate would examine the referral, assessment, planning and delivery of services for children in need, children in need of protection and children looked after. The inspection would particularly focus on services for disabled children.

It was reported that postal questionnaires had been sent out prior to the inspection, to establish the views of service users, staff and a range of partner agencies. The Commission identified a case sample of 100 families who received the services with the aim to gain a use view of the service that they have received. It was noted that the case sample of 100 families would be followed up with a detailed study of ten family cases, that would involve reading the case file and meeting families and the key workers.

A date of 9 November 2004 had been identified for verbal feedback on the inspection.

Resolved to note the Commission for Social Care Inspection would be carrying out an inspection of the children's services (Social Services) from 11 October to 22 October 2004.

MINUTES END