

ITEM 4

Time commenced 1.00pm

Time finished 3.15pm

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Thursday 9th December 2021

Present: Councillors Hezelgrave, Hussain, Kus, and Pandey

In attendance: Pervez Akhtar, Corporate Parenting Lead
Katie Evans, Commissioning Manager, Children in Care
Priya Gill, Deputy Youth Mayor
Judy Levitt, Head of Service, Fostering Service
Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care
Heather Peet, Designated Nurse

12/21 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from, Councillors Lind and Williams, Stephen Atkinson, Independent Chair, Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Partnership, Laura Bradley, CiC Council Participation Officer, Sharon Green, Head of Integration & Direct Services Adults, Andrew Kaiser, Head of Specialist Services, Jasmine Nembhard-Francis, Head of Service Quality Assurance, Andy Smith Strategic Director Peoples Services, Lorraine Smith, Commissioning Manager Early Help and Priority Families, Marlene Upchurch, Chair of Parent Carers Forum

13/21 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were none.

14/21 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

15/21 Minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

16/21 Children in Care Council – Update

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Committee on 22nd February 2022

17/21 Children's Placement Overview Report

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning Services which was presented by the Commissioning Manager, Children in Care.

The Committee heard that placements for children can be sourced from internal and external provision. There are a range of placements made by the service these include: Internal Fostering and Children's Homes, External Fostering through Independent Fostering

Agencies (IFAs), External Mother and Baby Fostering, External Children's Homes, External semi-independent and Secure Welfare placements.

There are three frameworks used to source placements:

- D2N2 Children in Care Framework, Accommodation and Support Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for Fostering and Children's Homes used in partnership by Derby City, Derbyshire County, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils
- Accommodation and Support DPS for 16 to 17 year olds for semi-independent placements and support accommodation, and
- Nottingham DPS, for semi-independent placements for 16 to 17 year olds with complex needs.

The number of each type of external placement as of 31 March 2021 was highlighted, details are at paragraph 4.3 of the report; the committee noted that the demand for all types of external placements was increasing. As of 31 March 2021, there were 642 Children in Care in Derby.

External Fostering placements are made using the D2N2 CiC Framework. The placements are made through a matching process, in partnership with social care, to ensure the right match. There was a national issue of a shortage of foster carers, Derby City Council continue to build and maintain relationships with local external providers to secure placement provision. The Corporate Fostering Recruitment Board also monitors the numbers of foster carers and retention of fostering households for Derby CiC. A pilot partnership between Derby City Council and Derby Homes had been created to deliver tailored support packages for semi-independent placements.

To ensure quality provision for all placements the service works positively with social care and providers. Most regulated settings are inspected by Ofsted including IFAs and Residential Children's Homes. Derby City will only put CiC with providers who have a "good" or "outstanding" Ofsted Inspection.

Pre-placement checks are undertaken on providers of semi-independent settings which are non-regulated before being approved for the Supported Accommodation DPS. A quality assurance programme looks at the suitability of non-regulated accommodation and monitors providers and/or property during the year based on a Red, Amber Green (RAG) rating.

An "Unregulated Supported Accommodation and Crisis Placement Statement and Guidance" document has been implemented to help people understand how unregulated processes work. If a complaint or concern is raised it is investigated; if standards do not meet needs, then improvements should be made. If providers do not meet standards they are removed from frameworks.

Derby City Council works to increase the number of local placements, to ensure sufficiency and improve the accommodation offer for CiC. The focus is on ensuring the right types of placements are available in the right location, which in most cases means local placements in Derby. Derby works with local authorities in D2N2 to look at capacity across the whole area, share resources and best practice. During the last 18 months the Supported Accommodation DPS has gone live increasing the number of providers in the city from six to over thirty. There is a STARS outcomes programme (Supporting Children and Young People to Achieve Resilience) which went live in October 2020; the partnership supports young people to meet outcomes in a range of accommodation settings.

Stakeholder engagement was discussed and it was explained that the "Voice of the Child" was included through the procurement process and embedded in tendering and evaluations.

Feedback from Voices in Action Group and CiC Council was integrated in the specification for the D2N2 service, supported accommodation and residential block contracting arrangements.

A councillor noted the quality assurance aspect of the report, particularly in respect of the unregulated settings. He felt this was important especially with the increase in the numbers of children coming into the system who need to be placed somewhere suitable and of good quality. He was reassured that good processes for feedback and response were in place.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:

- 1. to consider the content of the report**
- 2. that the Committee was reassured by the level of Scrutiny and Quality Assurance of outside providers in unregulated settings.**

18/21 Update report on Supporting Children and Young People to Achieve Resilience (STARS) Programme

The Committee received a report of the Director for Children's Integrated Commissioning. The report was presented by the Commissioning Manager CiC.

Derby City Council works in partnership with Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council to deliver an evidence-based service called STARS, which supports children on the edge of care and in care.

The programme was funded using Social Impact Bonds (SIB), which was a form of social investment and involved Local Authorities, Investors and Providers. Payments are made based on results/outcomes being met. SIBs also provide additional investments for interventions which are normally not affordable in the local area.

The interventions are holistic, wrap-around tailored packages of flexible support for foster carers and the young person. They can be licensed or developed by organisations themselves and have a track record of success. They support young people:

- who live in residential care to move back to foster care
- who are in foster care at risk of a placement breakdown to try and keep them in stable foster care
- who are currently looked after by the local authority (LA) but the LA would like to reunify with birth family or primary carers
- who are currently at risk of being taken into care

There are currently 66 young people in Derby on the programme which is run over a four-year period during which time individual cases can be referred to receive further interventions and support. There was a further two-year period when they are tracked.

Derby City Council signed the contract for STARS on 29 October 2020, year one targets for the programme have been achieved and are detailed at 4.8 of the report. The next steps are to identify more referrals, track and report the outcomes monthly and the financial impact for children and young people. Funding for the programme was due to end in October 2024

The Committee asked who the beneficiaries of the payments are and what would happen if the programme ended in 2024. The officer explained the beneficiaries are the local authorities who pay the service providers, and the intervention will continue for a further two years after 2024. The service is currently reviewing an exit plan; this was a pilot project to

see if benefits of outcome and finance are given. The Committee asked how it was ensured that funding was used for the correct purpose and the officer explained that there was a clear programme of delivery which was tracked. Currently there was a minimum of 66 children on the programme, but this can be expanded if there was need to refer more children; a clear eligibility criterion has been set. The committee were keen on the concept, the fact that provision can be escalated or de-escalated, but they felt there was a need to monitor the progress carefully; if the scheme was successful then it should be expanded. The programme should provide value for money for the Council as well as robust outcomes for children and young people that continue after payment has been made. The Committee wanted to see evidence in terms of outcomes, given the pandemic and lockdowns there are likely to be more referrals of children and young people into care.

The Committee resolved:

- 1. to note the performance of the STARS Social Impact Bond Programme to date**
- 2. that the Committee are pleased with initial information about this and would hope that if it is successful the programme will be expanded**
- 3. that Information should be provided to the committee within the next 6 months with evidence of value for money and more importantly of outcomes.**

19/21 Children's Homes Update, Inspection/Regulation 44 Reports and Member Visits

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services. The report was presented by the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care. The report provided the Committee with an overview of the different types of inspection and monitoring activity for Derby City Council's Children's Residential Homes.

Children's Homes are inspected by Ofsted as part of the Care Standards Act 2000. All Children's Homes are inspected twice a year, one full and one interim inspection. Homes are judged on overall progress and experiences of children and young people, how well children and young people are protected and the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers. No inspections took place in 2020 due to COVID. There are five Council Residential Children's Homes in Derby, but one is closed temporarily. The results of the recent Assurance Visits and Full Inspections were shared with the Committee and are detailed in the report in paragraph 4.4.

The Committee heard that previous inspections had identified that placement matching of young people needed to improve across the service. There was a national shortage of placements both in fostering and residential care. Placement matching was often a challenge. If there was a placement breakdown a new placement would need to be found urgently and often this meant an emergency referral to internal residential care as no other options were available.

Challenges in Children's Homes include the recruitment of appropriate staff and there was a shortage of management and staff. The availability of managers was a national issue and it had made it difficult to re-open Homes that had been closed on a temporary basis. Derby has a clear recruitment process for Residential Childcare Workers (RCCW) in place with corporate and HR support, which consisted of a rolling programme and advert.

During the pandemic the education of all children and young people was affected by school closures, shielding, self-isolating and lack of laptops. The service worked with the Virtual School closely to offer support and advice where needed to each of the homes. There was also a strong relationship with Health and meetings had taken place regularly with the

dedicated nurse for each home; managers had also been supported with healthy lifestyle advice including diet, exercise, and medication for CIC. Issues around accessing dentistry were improving as appointments systems re-opened.

Member Visits had been suspended during 2020 due to the Pandemic but they were due to begin again from the New Year. Discussions had taken place with the Cabinet Member and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Review Board regarding resumption of visits.

Information about Regulation 44 Visits are detailed at paragraph 6.1 for each home. There were no major issues identified in assessments. There were some minor issues such as recording of information, but all issues have been addressed as they arose. The recommendations from the Regulation 44 Visits are complimented with monthly Regulation 45 monitoring by the Home Manager.

The Committee appreciated all the efforts made by the staff through this difficult period but were still disappointed that the Children's Homes had not done better in their assessment outcomes from Ofsted which were "inadequate". The officer explained that of the four homes Assessed/Inspected two were judged "good" the other two were judged "required improvement". However, the Committee felt that if Derby City Children's Homes are not able to set good standards, they cannot provide an example of good practice for other Children's Homes to follow. The officer accepted their comment, and that work was needed to bring the homes back to the expected standard but highlighted the complicated environment that staff had worked in during the pandemic, the complex needs of the children in these homes and the lack of access to services normally available to them.

In terms of decisions about placements made, there had been difficulty because of a lack of suitable placements nationally and at times there was a need to make compromises with placements for children. The quality of care was high and multi-agency partnership working was excellent, but the placement was not always a match and Ofsted would penalise homes in these situations. The Committee still considered there should be progress in grading and asked if it would be possible to move a manager from a good establishment to a poorer one to facilitate improvement. The officer explained that one home was currently closed, and capacity would be increased with the recruitment of a new manager.

The Committee were concerned about the specific needs of children regarding commissioning from the private sector. The officer explained that wider learning around needs of young people was being considered. Some children and young people do not function in larger homes of four to five people, and the service was due to implement a small homes programme over the next few months. The commissioning side are looking at a range of different options with D2N2, but other local authorities are in the same or similar situation to Derby. Derby City has a range of different programmes and was increasing the range and offer for children to have placements for their needs in family or extended family settings. Strategic Commissioning takes time, the team was working with the private sector to prioritise placements for children in the local area. Children's needs have changed over the years, placements in smaller homes are better for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The council is strengthening its offer for children and was aiming to have a broad range of homes to meet children's needs, which will come to fruition over the next few years.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:

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

3. Councillors and members of the Board look forward to being able to take part in visits to our Children's Homes after member training has taken place.
4. Committee are concerned at the slow progress towards "Good" category from Ofsted by All Children's Homes which are open and that we wish every effort is made to make an improvement on that position in the future. The Board is seeking reassurance that progress is taking place and would like to see evidence such as internal audit of ongoing work and would like a progress report in 6 months' time*

**The officer advised the grading is an annual grading, for those Children's Homes "requiring improvement" the next Inspection result will be in October 2022*

20/21 Fostering Recruitment Update Report

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care. The report was presented by the Deputy Head of Service Fostering.

New initiatives were highlighted by the officer including:

Foster Friendly status for the Council – This was a benefits scheme for staff at DCC who are interested in fostering, benefits included 5 days extra leave per year. If approved and successful it was planned to roll out the scheme to other companies in Derby

Success of Payment for Skills scheme – Foster Carers being paid for their skills; with more training and the wider scope of age group they can care for, foster carers can be paid more. This gives more opportunity to foster children from Derby locally rather than out of the area.

Transfer of IFA carers to Derby City - encouraging foster carers currently with IFAs to move to become Derby City Carers; a publicity article was planned was Derby Telegraph.

New parent and Child scheme – 7 foster carers have been approved to foster parents and children together, savings of approximately £700.00 per week can be made for each placement. It was planned to run a recruitment drive for the scheme in the New Year.

Family and Friends team - projected increase in kinship placements – a specialist team who undertake Special Guardianship Order (SGO) placements for the locality service as well as Regulation 44. Previously close relatives like grandparents, aunts and uncles had not been supported as foster carers, a support group had been created which provided help to improve this situation. It was hoped that more children in care could be placed with Family and Friends in future.

The officer explained the plans for foster carer recruitment which involved more collaboration with D2N2 Local Authorities because working together provided better opportunities. The following options were proposed:

- Joint marketing campaigns
- New D2N2 website to encourage the message of Foster For your Council
- Shared Skills to Foster training
- Possible shared specialist training post app

A summary of the activity since April 2021 was provided by the officer:

- There had been 68 foster carer enquiries this year (120 last year)
- 18 initial visits had been completed this year (31 last year)
- 13 new applications were received this year (15 last year)
- In total 12 new households had been approved as foster carers (9 mainstream and 3 family and friends)
- There had been 7 de-registrations on foster carers (6 mainstream and 1 family and friends)

Since April there had been 9 new approvals of mainstream foster carers – 14 more beds, this is a net gain of 5 beds for CIC.

The officer outlined possible developments in other areas such as setting up supported lodgings for 16 to 21 years. This scheme was not for supported accommodation, which was aimed at more vulnerable young people, perhaps just leaving care, caring, and supporting them to become independent. This scheme would be aimed at more motivated young people who had not yet integrated into society and needed a bit of extra support to become more settled; the example of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) was given.

The assessment process would be simpler than for foster carers. The Committee asked if there would be quality assurance in place for this scheme. They were assured that people applying to be carers would be evaluated in the same way as foster carers and there would be scrutiny all the way through the scheme. Similar schemes had been successfully run in other local authorities and Derby was considering a pilot scheme for 12 months as a trial; there would be no cost to roll out, but savings could be achieved.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:

- 1. to note the report which gave an update on fostering recruitment and marketing strategies from the period of April 2021 to the end of September 2021 (Quarters 1 and 2).**
- 2. To see how the “Foster Friendly Initiative” of encouraging Derby City Council staff to become family carers works and then showcase / progress externally with external businesses and the council should explore the council’s procurement process as a means for doing this.**

21/21 Exit from Care Overview Report – Children’s Permanence Team Quarter 2 Update Report

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Children’s Social Care which was presented by the Team Manager, Early Help and Children’s Safeguarding.

The officer explained that the Exit in Care Permanence Team had been in place since 2013, it was developed to meet sufficiency requirements, and targets were attached to its performance. The team ensured children and young people are cared for in their local communities. From April 2017 to the date there has been an increase in the numbers of children exiting long term care and increased savings to the authority as a result.

The Targets for financial year 2021-22 for the Children’s Permanence Team are:

- Exit 28 children and young people from care via re-unification with families or using court orders such as Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) or Child Arrangement Orders (CAOs)
- Exit 35 children and young people from care via adoption

The officer highlighted the exits achieved during Quarter 2 2021-2022. The Team exited 8 children from care on SGOs and 3 children under Placement with Parents Regulations. During Quarter 1 one child was exited by an SGO. This was a total of 12 exits from care midway through 2021-22 and it was hoped to achieve 2 more SGOs during Quarter 3-4 2021-2022. The Team has the potential to achieve the target of 28 exits from care during 2021-22.

In the case of Adoptions 10 children out of the 35 had been placed for Adoption in Quarter 1-2 and there were a further 17 Adoption Orders. The officer then explained the projected number for Quarter 3, 67 cases were due to be moved through the system, there had been backlog issue, but the projections were that another 12 placements would be achieved making a total of 22 placements by the end of Quarter 3, she was confident that 35 Adoption placements would be achieved by Quarter 4.

The Committee thanked the officer for a well updated report but felt that more emphasis should be placed on the strengths of the service, it was pleasing to see so many children and young people in line to be placed, it was a credit to the team. The work alongside the children in Care Service was noted especially with the potential of exploring the use of CAOs as way of exiting children to the care of kinship carers.

The Committee asked if there could be a balance between entrance and exit to care. The officer explained that it was only possible to exit children and young people where it was safe to exit them; however, family situations do change, and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) look at cases every six months to see whether a child's birth family situation is different and whether it be safe time to exit children to family care.

The Committee asked if targets could be set for exiting care, could these be aimed for and explanations be given if they are not achieved. The officer explained that at the beginning of the Pandemic families were struggling to look after children, and there were more children coming into care. The recent case of child abuse and death had spiked anxiety within the services and there was pressure on local authorities consequently to receive referrals. There are always several factors in place which affect entrance and exit to care which do not enable local authorities to have a neat resolution to the situation. An officer explained that entrance into care was always a last resort and he reassured the Committee that the "right" children are coming into care, the service works hard to find homes for these children either with Foster Carers or using SGOs or through Adoption. There has been an increase in the numbers of children coming into care nationally and Derby was no different to the rest of the country.

The Committee noted that during Quarter 2 2021-2022 the Exit Team collectively had case responsibility for 17 cases and coworker responsibility for 14 cases. They felt that even if there was a greater demand on the service then every effort should be made to maintain this caseload level.

1. The Corporate Parenting Committee and Senior Manager noted the ongoing performance of the Children's Permanence Team (CPT)

- **An update on how many young people exited care per quarter and the onward forecast**
- **Quarterly staffing updates and forecasts for the next quarter**
- **A report on caseloads, both case responsibility and co-working**
- **An update under the arrangements young people exited from care**
- **An update on what additional work is being completed in the team**
- **Identification of service strengths and areas for development**

- 2. The Committee resolved that if there should be a greater demand on the service every effort should be made to maintain the current caseload levels of the Team which are detailed above and at 4.3 of the report.**

22/21 Report on Diversity and Heritage Pledge for Children in Care

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Children's Safeguarding which was presented by the Corporate Parenting Lead Officer.

The Board heard that the Diversity and Heritage Pledge for Looked After Children (LAC) had been developed by representatives in Children Social Care and the Children in Care Council.

The Committee heard that there were approximately 638 children and young people in Derby City's Care. These children are cared for well, but their diversity and heritage needs are not always met for several reasons, such as lack of education and knowledge of the importance and/or prioritising their safety and care. It was identified in 2020 that a concerted effort was needed to prioritise diverse needs for CIC. A task and finish group had been set up to look at this issue. The group had met several times and consulted with children and young people in care. A Vision statement was developed, it was also agreed that measurable milestones should be put in place to measure the impact of the Pledge.

The officer highlighted some of the actions so far from June 2021.

- The Diversity and Heritage Pledge had been endorsed by the Children in Care Council
- Derby Commissioning and Fostering service has developed additional questions in the referrals forms for social workers to respond to in relation to LAC

Children and Young People will be given a copy of the Pledge when they come into care.

Measurable outcomes of the work undertaken would take place during Assessments, Case File Audits, Statutory Reviews, Staff Supervision, Foster Carer Annual Reviews and feedback from children and young people and their families. Updates will be provided to CIC Council in terms of the implementation.

The Committee felt that the Pledge was a necessary addition in terms of care and support for children and young people in care; they said that it would be good to get feedback from the CIC Council in general about whether the Pledge had made a difference. They asked whether the Pledge would be put into different formats depending on the age of the child, some older children might feel patronized by the images used. The officer confirmed that the pledge had been shared with the CIC Council and they had not raised any issues about the format or images used. The Committee felt that the Pledge could be used when CIC moved schools so that the School could be involved and clear about processes.

The Committee endorsed the Pledge, it was a welcome step forward, children have equal worth and their heritage and social requirements should be equally valued and appreciated by Derby City Council.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:

- 1. To note the development of the Diversity and Heritage Pledge for Looked After Children.**
- 2. To endorse the Diversity and Heritage Pledge for Looked After Children, it emphasises that all children have equal worth and are equally valued by Derby**

City Council and we should be doing all we can to make sure that cultural heritage and other social requirements are catered for as much as possible we need to send this message to everyone who works with our children and everyone who becomes a recipient of our service.

- 3. Requested that the information be shared with all Derby City Council schools so that they can take it into account when inducting new pupils from outside the City or when they transfer from another school**

MINUTES END