

ITEM 4

Time commenced – 18:00pm

Time finished –18.48pm

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Tuesday 3 April 2018

Present: Councillor Bolton (Chair)
Councillors Care, Eldret, Harwood and Russell.

In attendance: Three representatives of the Children in Care Council
Pervez Akhtar – Corporate Parenting Lead Officer
Kate Burton – Head of Service, Locality 1 and 5
Kelly Buswell – SOVA Area Manager (East Midlands)
Jonie Centro – Multi Agency Team Leader
Julie Hart – Secretary of the Derby Foster Care Association
Alex Hough – Democratic Services Manager
Claire Hurst – Children's Participation Officer
Suanne Lim – Director of Children's Integrated Services
Hazel Lymbery – Director of Early Help and Children's Safeguarding
Catherine Young – Children in Care Commissioning and Placements Manager

34/17 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Marshall.

35/17 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were none.

Councillor Bolton welcomed members, officers and representatives of the Children in Care Council to the last meeting of the municipal year and thanked them for their previous contributions.

The Chair reported that meetings for the forthcoming municipal year would take place during school holidays at 1pm, at the request of the Children in Care Council.

36/17 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

37/17 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

38/17 Children in Care Council – Update April 2018

The Children's Participation Officer introduced three members of the Children in Care Council (CICC) to provide an update on their recent activity.

The Committee heard that a senior social worker was invited to attend a meeting of the CICC on 7 February 2018, to discuss the attributes they felt made a good social worker. It was reported that the views expressed by the young people have since been used in the development of an induction pack for new social workers.

At their February meeting, the CICC also commented on a Keeping Safe Online leaflet. Having accounted for the views of the young people, a revised leaflet was presented to their meeting on 7 March 2018.

Members heard evidence from the young people about some Children in Care being unable to participate in school photographs or videos, particularly in relation to extra-curricular activities such as sports teams or musical groups. It was noted how this could on occasion cause upset and disappointment for the children concerned.

The Committee shared the frustration of the young people and enquired whether the policy could be reviewed. The Children's Participation Officer reported that this had been passed to the Deputy Head of Service and he stated that decisions are made in relation to individual circumstances and that no such policy was in place. It was noted that this was also being discussed with team managers so that the situation could be avoided in future where possible.

The young people stated that members of the CICC had recorded podcasts that day for the Derby Safeguarding Children Board. It was reported that the videos would be shared online to help adults understand what they can do should they have concerns about the safety of a child.

The Committee enquired whether there were any means for the podcast to be shared more widely, particularly with elected members. The Children's Participation Officer noted that the podcasts were specifically recorded for the Derby Safeguarding Children Board and would be accessible on their website once published. It was noted that as there were significant demands on the time of young people involved with the CICC, recording podcasts could represent an effective means of disseminating information in future.

The young people reported that they had been invited to a regional meeting of Children in Care Councils on 1 June 2018, which the Children's Commissioner would be attending. The Director of Children's Integrated Services noted that four places had also been made available for members of the Care Leavers Forum and that enquiries were currently being made for senior officers and lead members to also attend the meeting.

The Committee also heard that members of the CICC had conducted a telephone audit of children in care living at a distance from Derby. It was noted that ten young

people had been contacted that day, including those in residential placements, foster placements and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Resolved to note the update from the Children in Care Council.

39/17 Care Leavers Forum Report

The Director of Children's Integrated Services presented a report updating the Committee on the recent activity of the Care Leavers Forum. The report included a number of suggestions for future development to improve the support offered to care leavers.

The Committee heard that work had been undertaken in conjunction with Derby Homes to improve security of tenancy for care leavers, in response to concerns raised by the Forum. For example, training courses were now available for care leavers approaching the age of 18 who were looking to secure their first tenancy.

However, it was noted that some young people had been forced to surrender tenancies and even personal possessions in order to go travelling, because they lacked suitable storage options.

It was reported that the Forum had also raised concerns about the limited social networks and the difficulty experienced by some care leavers in accessing information, contacting others and becoming more independent. It was noted that proposals for a Communications Allowance had been welcomed on this basis.

Other suggestions made by the Forum included befriending and respite options for care leavers, as well as providing access to driving lessons. The Director of Children's Integrated Services stated that these requests were being explored.

Members emphasised the importance of learning to drive for young people in order to access employment, but noted that the costs of running a vehicle were often beyond the financial means of many care leavers. Councillor Care suggested that other forms of transport were also encouraged and urged officers to consider a discounted cycle scheme as a complimentary measure.

The Committee noted that following a decision taken by Council Cabinet on 14 February 2018, young people leaving care would be exempt from paying Council Tax in Derby. The Chair stated her intention to write to care leavers to inform them of the positive news.

It was reported by the Director of Children's Integrated Services that these measures and others would contribute to the establishment and publication of a Care Leavers Local Offer, which had recently become a statutory requirement under the Children and Social Worker Act 2017.

Members enquired about the levels of participation from care leavers in the Care Leavers Forum. The Director of Children's Integrated Services acknowledged that this still represented a challenge, but reported that two young people attended the

February meeting and options were being explored to increase levels of engagement.

Resolved to note the report and consider the recommendations of the Care Leavers Forum.

40/17 Inspection and Monitoring of Children's Homes

A report was presented on the Inspection and Monitoring of Children's Homes.

The Chair stated that there had been no significant change since the Committee previously met, with five out of six children's homes rated as Good by OFSTED at their last full inspection. It was noted that a robust set of measures was being implemented to ensure that 402 Sinfin Lane is rated as Good or Outstanding upon its next inspection.

The Chair emphasised her commitment to visiting children's homes and thanked those councillors who had participated in visits over the course of the municipal year.

Resolved to note the report.

41/17 Annual Performance Update – Derby's Looked After Children and Young People

The Director of Children's Integrated Services presented an update prepared by the Performance and Intelligence Division regarding local and national performance outcomes for looked after children and young people.

The Director of Children's Integrated Services reported a steady increase in the number of children entering care over the last three quarters in Derby, with an average of 67 per quarter since April 2017 compared to 53 per quarter in 2016/17. It was noted that this reflected national trends and was below the rate of increase for comparator authorities.

It was further reported that there had been an increase in the number of 16 and 17 year olds entering care. When questioned by members, the Director of Children's Integrated Services noted that this was likely due to an increased risk of homelessness at a critical age and that in certain circumstances a young person could 'opt-in' to services for looked after children at this point.

It was stated that thresholds for entering care had been tested twice in the last twelve months, as well as during a recent 'Mocksted' exercise, and were found to be at an appropriate level. Other trends reported to the Committee included an increase in the number of large sibling groups entering care, particularly from new communities.

Members asked why outcomes for development checks had fallen from 82 per cent in March 2017 to 62 per cent for quarter three of 2018/19. The Corporate Parenting Lead Officer noted that these checks were carried out by health partners and that outcome data was unlikely to have been fed through by the end of Q3.

Resolved:

- **To note the report.**
- **To circulate updated performance outcomes for the completion of development checks to members of the Corporate Parenting Committee, once quarter four data had been made available.**

42/17 Update on the East Midlands Regional Children's Framework and External Care Providers

The Children in Care Commissioning and Placements Manager presented a report detailing work that had recently been undertaken with local providers to source fostering and residential placements for Derby's children in care.

It was noted that the East Midlands Regional Children's Framework had been in place since February 2016 for this purpose and was due to be reviewed and strengthened before its conclusion in January 2020.

The Children in Care Commissioning and Placements Manager reported that as of 31 January 2018, Derby City Council had 280 placements with external providers comprising of 259 fostering placements, 13 children's home placements and 8 disabled children's home placements.

It was noted that the number of external fostering placements had increased by 62.5 per cent since 2015. This was attributed to the capacity to make internal placements; the recruitment of foster carers and the changing needs of young people entering care.

The significant additional cost to the authority of making external placements was noted, however it was reported that costs were capped over the lifetime of the Regional Framework, which ensured a benchmarked price.

Councillor Harwood enquired about the extent to which Derby City Council was working with neighbouring authorities with regards to securing external placements. The Children in Care Commissioning and Placements Manager reported that the Regional Framework allowed member authorities to act as a consortium, ensuring councils received the same price.

Resolved to note the report.

43/17 The Children's Rights Service Update

The East Midlands Area Manager for Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults (SOVA) presented an overview of progress to date in the provision of a Children's Rights Service. It was noted that SOVA had provided the service since April 2017, following the conclusion of a comprehensive tendering process.

The Committee heard that SOVA had provided an Independent Visitor Service, which matched young people to Independent Visitors based on shared interests, location, personality and matters raised by social care practitioners.

It was noted that 38 young people currently benefited from the scheme, with 14 young people waiting to be matched. The SOVA Area Manager reported that the current waiting period was three to four months, which they aimed to improve.

It was also reported that SOVA provided an Independent Advocacy Service, which allowed a young person to raise a complaint or make other representations about their care. It was noted that referrals must be responded to within two working days and that this deadline was missed in one recent instance.

The Chair questioned the SOVA Area Manager about quality assurance processes in relation to the case. The Director of Integrated Children's Services and the Corporate Parenting Lead confirmed they were aware of the situation and were working with SOVA to investigate the circumstances under which the deadline was missed.

Resolved:

- **To note the report and progress made to date in the delivery of a Children's Rights Service.**
- **To forward the outcome of officer investigations regarding the missed deadline for an Independent Advocacy referral to the Cabinet Member for Safeguarding and Children and Young People upon completion.**

44/17 Children in Care Concordat

The Director of Children's Integrated Services noted the establishment of a Children in Care Concordat, which aimed to develop a multi-agency approach to supporting children in care who may come into contact with the youth justice system.

It was noted that children in care in England were six times more likely to be cautioned or convicted of an offence than other children, despite 94 per cent of children in care never getting in trouble with the Police. It was further noted that many children in care who came in contact with the Police faced a higher rate of conviction.

The Director of Children's Integrated Services reported that a Pledge and Charter would be produced and that the approach was being developed in conjunction with partners including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Crown Prosecution Service, Youth Offending Service, Residential Children's Services, mental health care providers and voluntary sector organisations.

Councillors enquired whether maintained schools and Academy Trusts were also involved with the Concordat. The Director of Children's Integrated Services stated that educational provision for children in care involved with the youth justice system was currently focused through the Pupil Referral Unit, but the aim was to create an inclusive culture where schools will seek to provide places for those with additional needs.

The Chair reiterated that the responsibility to act as Corporate Parents extended to partner agencies, including Academy Trusts. The Secretary of the Derby Foster Care Association welcomed the multi-agency approach and stated that it was long overdue.

Resolved:

- **To approve the development of a multi-agency Concordat for children in care in Derby.**
- **To provide a further update on the development of the Concordat at a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee.**

45/17 Children in Care and Leaving Care Apprenticeship Scheme

The Head of Service for Locality 1 and 5 and the Multi Agency Team Leader presented an overview of progress made in the development of a Children in Care and Leaving Care Apprenticeship Scheme.

It was reported that a dedicated Leaving Care Personal Advisor was working closely with Connexions to identify candidates for apprenticeships. The Chair also noted recent Pledge events held to encourage participation in the scheme, with Derby Homes acknowledged as particularly active in this regard.

It was also reported that commitments had been received from a number of Derby City Council departments that had offered to provide guaranteed interviews for children in care and care leavers interested in taking up apprenticeships.

Officers reported that nine young people in care have been or are currently an apprentice with Derby City Council, with two now directly employed by the authority. The Chair reinforced the council's continued commitment to the project and noted that the administration's pledge to provide eight apprenticeships to care leavers had been met.

Councillor Russell reiterated the importance of the authority leading the way in promoting apprenticeships and pointed to the example of the Derby Apprenticeship Hub, which had been designed by a Derby City Council apprentice.

Councillors asked whether approaches had been made to employers in the private sector. The Multi Agency Team Leader confirmed that positive work was being carried out with employers in the city to demonstrate the positive contribution apprentices can make to the workplace.

It was reported that the possibility of using the Apprenticeship Levy to support the project was also being explored in conjunction with the council's Human Resources and Legal Services departments.

Resolved to note the report and record the Corporate Parenting Committee's support for maintaining a proactive approach in providing apprenticeship opportunities for children in care and care leavers.

MINUTES END