

Time commenced 1:00pm

Time finished 3:00pm

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Tuesday 31 October 2023

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

In attendance: Steve Atkinson, Independent Chair Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Childrens Partnership,
Laura Bradley, CiC Council, Participation Officer
2 representatives from the CiC Council
Graeme Ferguson, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Looked After Children
Andrew Hore, Team Manager Fostering
Andrew Kaiser, Head of Specialist Services
Harman Kaur, Deputy Youth Mayor
Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help & Children's Social Care
Muhammad Muntasir, Youth Mayor
Helen O'Higgins, NHS Derby & Derbyshire ICB
Heather Peet, Designated Nurse CiC NHS
Catherine Young, Head of Childrens Commissioning, Brokerage and Market Management

10/23 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from, Councillor Lonsdale, Pervez Akhtar, Corporate Parenting Lead, Johanna Barker, Deputy Head of Service for Children in Care, Kelly Buswell Programme Manager and Joanne Groombridge, Children's Rights Service, Sharon Green, Head of Direct Services, Maria Murphy, Director of Derby Homes, Andy Smith, Strategic Director Peoples Services, Nicola Smith, Assistant Director Children's Strategic Commissioning, NHS.

11/23 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were none.

12/23 Declarations of Interest

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

13/23 Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

14/23 Children in Care Council (CiCC) Update

The Committee received a report from the Director of Early Help and Social Care. 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 Group (OvOs) since July 2023.

An August Summer Event which was a get together organised by the PO to thank those who had attended meetings during the year for their time and support. Early in the summer a poll was sent out to all members asking them what they would like to do as a fun event. There was minimal engagement with the poll. It was arranged to attend Paradise Golf in Derby followed by lunch, however there was little uptake.

The September meeting was to be a hybrid meeting to enable wider accessibility. The focus was on “you Said, We Did” and looked at what the CiC have been involved with during the year and what changes/improvements took place. However, the meeting was cancelled as there was no uptake on attendance. The information was circulated to members for their information and feedback and was also taken into Derby City Council Residential Homes. The PO explained her concerns about the lack of uptake of the two meetings

An update was provided on the **Young Recruiters Group**. A training session for young people took place in the summer break. The session was well attended by young people who were keen to be a part of the recruitment process within the local authority. A further session was planned for those unable to attend the first one.

All services who employ staff that support our CiC should be encouraged to involve the group with interviews where possible. The PO will help with facilitating this and has details of young people who have completed their training and would like to be on interview panels.

The first **OVOS Steering Group** meeting took place on 12th September. The meeting was well attended with representatives from CiC Teams, the Virtual School amongst many others. The key points of discussion were to increase the awareness of participation for young people including support from the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). The Virtual School will support the school cluster groups model beginning in October.

School Cluster Groups, the first School Participation meeting was held at Woodlands School on 17th October. All secondary age CiC were invited to attend with their school. The outcome of the session and further information will be brought to the next Corporate Parenting meeting.

Residential Participation, the PO visited Derby City Residential Homes in August and October 2023. The August visit focused on the Pledge Poll as part of the review of the Pledge. The Pledge Poll will run until the end of October with the findings coming to the next OVOS group on 7th November. For the October visits the focus was to give information about the You Said We Did. Feedback was given to young people on the outcomes of change following their views.

The Language of Care, the PO has worked with the Director of Early Help and Social Care to embed the initiative for the language used by all who work with and support CiC. This came from a recommendation of this Committee, due to feedback received from a Care Leaver who attended the Regional Residential, focussing on the language used and the feelings this evokes for young people.

Age Range, the Committee were informed that the CIC Council currently consults with an age range of 10-24 to include Care Leavers. It was increased from 10-18 years to enable long standing members of the group the opportunity to take part in consultation, as at the time there was no Care Leavers Forum. The PO would now like to review this agreement with a view to lowering the age range back to 10-18 years, as there is a Care Leavers Forum in place now.

Care Leavers Update. The PO has worked with the Personal Adviser/Staying Close Lead with the Leaving Care Team to plan smooth transition from the OVOS group to the Clear

Leavers Forum to ensure care leavers are able to participate in consultation work and still be a part of a group.

The Committee welcomed the report and were impressed with the work being done. It was noted that both the Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor had made a pledge to assist young people in care. The Committee discussed the lack of uptake of the event and meetings in August and September. It was suggested by one committee member that it may have been due both events taking place in the school holidays. Another committee member asked if poor engagement by CiC was because of promises not being kept by the local authority (LA) and others partner organisations, and how was this being dealt with? The PO felt this was a part of the Pledge, which needed to be kept current and reviewed regularly, it should be at the forefront of people's minds and there was a need for accountability. The committee member suggested this should be across the Board and not just the LA. It was suggested that relationships with Foster Carers should be built up and they should be made more aware of the CiC and its activities. The Chair asked that once the Pledge had been renewed it should be brought to this committee for their consideration.

The Committee discussed the possible change in age range. They felt it was important that the age level was right. They considered whether the group should be split in two but were informed there were not enough resources or capacity available to support this. An officer suggested that the young people of the CiC Council should be asked if they wanted to be in different age groups, the Committee agreed this would be the right approach.

The officer highlighted that there was a wider piece of strategic work to refresh the Corporate Parenting Strategy ongoing. A "Big Conversation" had already begun involving all Team Managers and above in Early Help and Social Care. The committee suggested that any work on the Pledge needs to be linked to the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and the Foster Carer network should be used to encourage the participation of young people.

The committee asked why teenagers do not want to be involved and engage with the CiC and its activities. One of the CiC Council members explained that there was a stigma to being in care, young people often do not want to be recognised as being in care, and this was one of the biggest barriers.

The PO highlighted that a poll had been undertaken to find out how young people would like to participate in activities. It had resulted in "face to face" events being most preferred; another preference was for bi-monthly meetings with some activities, but there was not much support for virtual meetings. The PO indicated that some young people also attend for one aspect alone such as "young recruiters" but are not interested in attending CiC meetings. The PO was trying to create different formats and different strands of interest for young people to encourage engagement. The Committee suggested incentivising attendance with rewards. The PO explained that food, usually pizza, was always available at events, shopping vouchers were given as rewards and competitions were organised.

The committee agreed not to vote on the change of age range for CiC and asked that the PO consulted with the different age groups and tie this in with the Corporate Parenting Strategy Review. Once reviewed the Corporate Parenting Pledge should be brought to a future Corporate Parenting Committee.

The Committee

- 1. Noted the report and feedback from Children in Care Council**
- 2. Agreed that the Participation Officer should consult with the different age groups in the CiC Council and this work should be tied in with the Corporate Parenting Strategy Review.**

3. Requested that the Corporate Parenting Pledge should be brought to a future Corporate Parenting Committee.

15/23 Children's Homes Update – Inspection/Regulation 44 Reports and Member Visits

The Committee received a report from the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care. The report provided the Committee with an overview of Derby City Council's Children's Residential Homes internal and external inspections.

Children's Residential Homes are inspected usually at least twice a year, receiving one full and one interim inspection. If a Home is judged as "Inadequate" notification will be issued to the Home with a timescale to undertake any actions needed.

The officer explained there were five homes, 3 had been rated "Good" after inspection and 2 had been rated "Requires Improvement. The table on Ofsted Inspection Outcomes was on page 3 of the report.

The officer informed the Committee that **recruitment and retention** of staff had continued to be a challenge over the last two years. It was recognised that recruiting of staff in the care sector was a national issue. The service had been working regionally on a recruitment campaign to attract more people into the profession.

It was reported that there had been changes in Management across four of the five homes which had created opportunities to develop internal staff. The service also changed its way of recruiting staff. Managers sought staff via social media. This was successful, but there are more inexperienced staff in post which presents some challenges.

The service's staff continued to receive **training** both virtual and face to face. There was success with staff undertaking the Level 4 Apprenticeship programme children and young people in social care.

Education for children in residential homes. The service continued to engage with the virtual school leads each month. One young person had secured an Apprenticeship but had decided not to take it up and to focus on college. Most children and young people are participating in some form of education, but it was a challenge to some of them due to various factors. Support in the Home by the staff and outside agencies like a tutor for home-schooling was given.

The officer informed the committee about **health**, it was explained that monthly meetings were held each month with the Looked After Care Nurses (LAC). Drop-in sessions by the LAC nurses were held around the needs of young people and children. The work included sexuality, positive relationships, substance misuse, healthy eating and sleeping, because of their success the was agreed they can move to quarterly meetings. The Committee heard that most young people and children in residential care had attended the dentist, optician and had health reviews.

Elected Members Visits had been undertaken in June 2023 to all the Children's Residential Homes by the Chair, who was accompanied by the Director of Children's Early Help and Social Care. No concerns were raised in relation to the visits. Monthly **Regulation 44 Visits** take place at each Residential home. A quarterly report had been produced to allow Children's Social Care to Monitor progress of

visits across the service. At Homes A, B, C and E no major issues were identified. Home D had been closed since January 2020 and had just re-opened in May 2023. The recommendations featured work to be done on bullying and encouraging engagement in education.

A councillor asked about invitations to visit the homes had been sent out. If they had not could visits to Care Homes be arranged for councillors at least once a year. The officer explained that the Pandemic had impacted these arrangements, but visits had been arranged in late 2022/23. She would arrange further Care Home visits with the support of Democratic Services.

A Councillor was concerned and wished to be reassured that Care Homes C and D both had Action Plans to improve from "Requires Improvement". The officer confirmed they both did have Action Plans which were being progressed and were monitored by Ofsted, an update on the Action Plans can be provided to the Committee and they would be the first two homes scheduled for a visit.

The Committee:

- 1. Recommended that a letter of support and thanks be sent from the Committee to staff for all their good work.**
- 2. Requested reassurance and evidence that Ofsted Action Plans were being progressed for the two Care Homes which were currently "Required Improvement".**
- 3. Requested that the Member Visits to Care Homes be re-started and that the first two homes to be visited by elected members should be those that "Required Improvement".**
- 4. Noted 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.**
- 5. Noted the content of the report as Corporate Parents.**

16/23 Annual Fostering Report

The Committee received the Annual report and presentation of the Director of Early Help and Childrens Social Care. The report was presented by the Deputy Head of Service Fostering and provided an overview of work undertaken by the Fostering Service.

The report explained the role of the Fostering Panel and provided data about the key functions of the fostering team such as the number of foster carers approved and the number of carers who have chosen to leave the service. The officer highlighted that 18 new fostering families were recruited this year and 11 mainstream foster carers had resigned. The need to use private sector foster carers continued to be reduced.

Fostering Panels have a crucial role to play in the provision and monitoring of Foster Carers and placements for Looked After Children. The officer informed the committee that the independent Chair of the Foster Panel was required to contribute to the annual report and highlighted his summary.

It was explained that the Panel consisted of an independent chair and 2 vice-chairs, one of whom was also the High Sheriff of Derbyshire since April 2023. The central list for the Panel has grown and now includes two care-experienced panel members, who have the benefit of insight as adults from knowing what it was like to be fostered as a child.

Safeguarding and confidentiality - the committee were informed that between April 2022 and March 2023 eight referrals were made by the fostering service to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Five of these were made to the Derby City Council LADO Service and three to the LADO service from other authorities where the foster carers lived. Of the eight referrals made five were not met, two were unsubstantiated and one was unfounded.

Management, outcomes, and financial state of the fostering service, it was reported that from May 2022 the recruitment and support teams combined their roles to become two teams which both cover recruitment assessment and support. This meant carers had more continuity with the same social workers assessing and then supporting them in their fostering role. It allowed for more flexibility in allocating assessments and meant caseloads were equal across the two teams.

The Payment for Skills scheme has continued to be well received and foster carers are committed to learning and training. The financial package recognising the skill base and experience that foster carers develop meant that a package of remuneration that competes with the private sector could be provided, and because of this there has been a growing number of Independent Fostering Agency foster carers who are interested in transferring to DCC.

Fostering Allowances must be reviewed annual in line with the inflation rate. DCC's payments had been the highest in the region recently, but as part of the collaboration work with D2N2 other local authorities in the region are now aligning their fees with DCC.

The officer highlighted the **recruitment activity** between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. In total there were 18 approvals, 11 Mainstream and 7 Family and Friends. The figure was lower than last year, there were 26 approvals in total, 16 Mainstream and 10 Family and Friends.

During 2022-23, 153 fostering enquiries were received, 102 information packs were sent out. 54 visits were completed, and 48 households were invited to apply to be foster carers (88%). Of the 48 households, 35 applications were received (72% compared to 28% in 2021-22). The 13 households that did not respond were tracked. 10 of the households could not be reached. 1 household did not want to proceed, 1 could not proceed due to finance issues and another had a change in circumstances. From the 35 applications received 11 became approved foster carers and 9 households are still being assessed. 15 households withdrew from the assessment process.

The officer highlighted that by the end of March 2023, DCC had the highest number of fostering households in the previous 6 years (139 households compared to 129 at the end of March 2022). There are now 237 fostering places compared to 215 last year.

Placements of children during 2022-23, the committee were informed there was a growth in the total number of internal fostering placements. There was a decrease in the reliance on external foster placements with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). From April 2022 to February 2023: The total number of internal foster placements increased from 152 (32.5%) to 161 (34.2%). The total number of IFA foster placements decreased from 315 to 289.

There were 11 de-registrations of mainstream foster cares during the year, this was about 9% of the carer base. The figure was below the national average of 16% of foster carers stopping fostering each year and shows positive performance in the retention of foster carers

in Derby. The Board noted that 6 of the foster carers who left during the year had been approved for less than 18 months. This was concerning and could be related to issues in the assessment process or support after approval. Several of the foster carers were approved during the pandemic which could have affected them negatively. Foster care registration will be monitored and analysed during 2023-24. None of the foster carers left to work for IFAs, but several IFA foster carers now work for DCC.

The officer highlighted some of the **engagement and support available for foster carers** which included the Foster Carers Association since the pandemic ended, they have returned to having face to face meetings, coffee morning and social events. The chairperson attends corporate fostering meetings. The range of support groups for foster carers has expanded and now includes a new group to support applicants in the assessment process.

The committee felt it was a good report and was positive, progress was moving in the right direction, children have complex needs and development was being put in place to find out why a high proportion of foster carers had dropped out half-way through the assessment process. The officer agreed it was a high rate and there was a need to examine the reasons for leaving. One reason suggested was that a lot of the assessment work for foster carers had not been done face to face during the pandemic. A councillor asked if exit interviews were undertaken. The officer stated that apart from those retiring all foster carers received an exit interview on leaving.

The Committee noted and approved the annual Fostering Agency report and statement of purpose.

17/23 Children's Placements Overview Report (including update report on Regional Framework and External Care Providers)

The Committee received a report of the Director of Commissioning Children and Young People which was presented by the Head of Children's Commissioning, Brokerage and Market Management. The report explained the different types of placements that Derby City Council (DCC) make for children and young people and what the providers offer. DCC use lists of providers on compliant framework agreements who can demonstrate that they offer safe accommodation and good support.

There were two new initiatives as part of the Accommodation Strategy, the first was a small children's residential home. The first home had opened with 1 young person in residence. Once an evaluation of phase 1 has been completed, phase 2 will be looked at.

The second was Specialist properties with Derby City, Derbyshire County Council, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council (D2N2). Funding from the DfE was secured by DCC and Nottinghamshire County Council to build or buy properties for specialist homes. The idea was to provide wrap around support for Education/social care and health needs to prevent hospital admissions.

The three frameworks used to provide placements are:

- D2N2 Children in Care Framework
- DCC Young People's Supported Accommodation Block Contract (16 to 18 year olds and care leavers up to 21 years)
- D2N2 Supported Accommodation Framework (16 to 18 year olds and care leavers up to 21 years)

There are two other frameworks which are the DCC Supported Accommodation DPS which will be phased out by 01.04.24) and the In-house Supported Accommodation for 18+ year UASC a pilot scheme due to end in January 2024.

The officer explained that from June 2023 the Child's Placement Team and the Adults Brokerage Team moved under the Head of Children's Commissioning, Brokerage and Market Management to form a hub. The team was looking at being creative and innovative in placement referrals. A video referral scheme was being piloted and there would be a fortnightly bulletin, both internal and external. The Team will make video bulletins.

Quality Assurance, the officer explained that most settings are inspected by Ofsted. Regulated settings include IFAs and Residential Children's Homes. Supported accommodation settings which are non-regulated are subject to quality assurance checks.

It was explained, DCC undertakes a lot of development work with the aim of increasing **local placement sufficiency** and improving the accommodation offer for children in care. The DCC Children in Care Placements Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy was being updated.

The number of external placements made by DCC had increased over the last five years. External placements are more expensive than in-house placements and market demand was bigger than supply. The complexity of care packages needed has meant the total cost of placements has risen.

The cost of external foster and children's homes placements have changed from 373 placements costing £25m in 2021 to 354 placements costing £27m in 2022, to 318 placements costing £28m in 2023.

The number of supported accommodation placements had increased from 44 placements costing £0.6m 2016 to 53 placements costing over £1.3m in 2023.

The Board were informed that there had been a reduction in costs for the top 10 placements by analysing and challenging priorities. The Committee noted that even though the number of external placements had been reduced the costs had risen.

A Councillor asked if the Communications Team would be able to help with the pilot video referral scheme, the officer confirmed that Communications support had been sought and was being provided. The Councillor asked there was a possibility of a second small residential home being in place soon. The officer confirmed it was planned to look at possible sites for a second home over the next few months and that DCC would support the second initiative of specialist homes with D2N2.

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report.

18/23 Update Report on STARS Programme

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director for Children's Integrated Commissioning which was presented by the Head of Children's Commissioning, Brokerage and Market Management. The report gave an update to the Committee on progress and outcomes achieved through the STARS programme and outlined the current position, priorities, and emerging themes.

The committee were informed that DCC worked in partnership with Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils to establish the use of Social Impact Bonds which were a form of social investment. From 29th October 2020 services were contracted with Outcomes for Children (The Polaris Group), the delivery agent and Futures Limited the private investor. The outcome was to get better social outcomes by achieving stable family type placements and, if possible, for the children to remain with their families.

The interventions supported young people in the following groups:

- Young people living in residential care, supporting them to step down to foster care.

- Young people currently living in foster care and at a high risk of placement breakdown or at risk of entering residential care, supporting them to remain in stable foster care.
- Young people who are currently looked after by the Local Authority but whom the LA was seeking to re-unify with the birth family or primary carers.
- Young people who are at risk of being taken into care and supporting them to remain safely with the families/primary carers.

The STARS programme runs for a four-year period and the outcomes are tracked for 2 years. The funding model was using a Social Impact Bond (SIB). Investors fund the costs to deliver an improvement to the service, the LA pays on delivery of a successful outcome, rather than on service delivery.

The officer explained that the programme met its targets in year 1, in year 2 the targets reached were lower than expected. In year 3 so far, the targets are lower than planned. The numbers of referrals progressed by Outcomes for Children had not met the required number for year 3. Across D2N2 the programme needs a minimum of 51 referrals and so far only 47 referrals had been made as of September 2023. The SIB was at risk of penalty payments if referrals are not achieved in the final year. The committee were informed that over the three years referrals for all the authorities involved have decreased.

The officer outlined the next steps which were to increase ways of identifying correct referrals and improving communication with social care. It was also aimed to reduce notification time to professionals meeting. The committee noted that the service's first case was completed in year 3, this was for a stepdown from residential to foster care.

A councillor was concerned that the work of the programme was not duplicated in the service. The officer explained that they were working with 3 authorities looking at stepdown and residential care. The programme involved forecasting for 3 years, there was a challenge around stepdown as there was a need for foster carers and more placements. The programme was slightly more complex to manage than had been expected. There was a need to analyse what had been gained from the programme and how to move forward in the future.

A councillor asked which group of young people would be focused on going forward. The officer explained that in the past this was an excellent programme. There was a need now to focus on high level step down from residential care.

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report.

19/23 Update report on Reducing Criminalisation by Children in Care CONCORDAT

The Committee received a report of the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care which was presented by the Head of Specialist Services. The report provided the Committee with an update on CONCORDAT.

CONCORDAT was an agreement across the children and young people's partners in Derby City to join up work under one vision to avoid unnecessary criminalisation of children in care. It was launched in October 2018 across all based residential homes in the city. It was led by tactical and operational groups in the Youth Justice Service, CPS, Police, and residential services. A protocol and an action plan were in place to support tactical and operational delivery.

The officer informed the committee that the work of CONCORDAT had continued over the last 12 months and highlighted the progress:

- A programme of joint triage of children and young people appearing in Police custody between Derbyshire Constabulary and the Youth Justice Service had been developed.

- Managers of children's homes attended section tasking meetings and ensured information was fed back to staff in homes, so they are aware of key risk areas and individuals.
- Staff in residential and specialist services have accessed an online training module on attachment and trauma which was commissioned by the Virtual School. They also attended a one-day conference on attachment, trauma and neurodevelopment.
- The Commissioning Service confirmed that all private residential homes on the DCC contract have signed up to the CONCORDAT conditions.
- The Complex case manager was involved in cases where there were concerns about a child's mental health and the existing pathways were not meeting that need.
- Enhanced Case Planning meetings have continued for children in DCC residential homes.

An analysis of **police data** had been compiled for DCC children's homes for April 2022 to March 2023. There had been a reduction in offences at all 4 homes in the last 12 months. The types of crime for each home had also been recorded, there was a large reduction in offences across all 4 homes. The most common type of crime was violence without injury, accounting for 22% of crimes. At home 2 in 2022-23 criminal damage offences was down to 20% compared to 31% the previous year.

The analysis of **incidents** in the 4 homes showed there had been a decrease of 63% in the number of reported incidents during 2022-23. Incidents in home 1 decreased by nearly 85%, going from 122 recorded incidents to 19. Home 2 reduced to nearly 62% falling from 195 incidents to 75. Homes 3 and 4 had the smallest reduction in reported incidents, going from 113 to 66 about 42%.

The officer explained that the reductions demonstrate that with the right mix of well-matched children, strong child first management principals and adherence to CONCORDAT protocol, crime rates can be kept at a low rate. Overall, there was an optimistic picture in homes across 2022-23. All homes had shown stability and reduced numbers of offences being committed.

Youth Justice Service (YJS) Data 2022-23 showed there was a slightly larger number of Looked After Children living in DCC homes who were involved with the YJS service and there was an increase in the number of offences. Upon investigating the young people involved all had complex needs and assessments showing involvement in some form of criminal exploitation. Although negative the data does indicate that the patterns of offending behaviour were correctly brought to the attention of the YJS system and ensured that the children had clear boundaries for their unsafe behaviour and there was a robust approach for crime victims. The YJS service work with this complex group of children and attempt to reduce their offending behaviour. They are supported by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales and use a trauma informed approach with the help of Health funded staff.

The Cromarty Model was still used in Enhanced Care Planning Meetings (ECPMs) to measure progress children made against identified targets. Ten targets are identified by the "team around the child" which are appropriate for the child. A baseline score against these targets was established which was then re-scored at following ECPMs which enabled progress to be measured.

The officer highlighted challenges facing the service. The key risk factor for children related to their emotional health which could lead to situations where their behaviour became uncontrolled which could cause criminal behaviour or self-harm. There are also challenges around placement sufficiency, this was a national issue and meant difficulties in locating suitable placements for children especially those with a high level of need. It was reported that the YJS Clinical Psychology post had continued with funding from the Integrated Care Board, but there was no agreement from health to continue to fund the Youth Well-Being

Worker post beyond October 2022. This issue was resolved by bringing in a match funded Speech and Language Therapist to provide a therapeutic mentoring approach.

The **Next Steps** for CONCORDAT included:

- A development of the Action Plan by tactical group members and a refresh and relaunch of the Protocol in early 2024. A podcast would also be created.
- A single point of contact for DCC residential homes would be identified.
- Stability meetings would be implemented in DCC children's homes to ensure that any signs of potential risk to placement stability were addressed using a whole system approach.
- Implementation of a quarterly data meeting between YJS, Police and residential services to track cases of children who have been and are going through police investigation, to ensure that the response was in line with the CONCORDAT protocol.
- Bring private providers into the tactical group.

A councillor asked for further explanation and a key for the chart on the Cromarty Model as he was unclear about the data. The Virtual Head provided more information to give clarity, it was explained that this was just a snapshot of one group of 12 children in care.

Another councillor was concerned about the police data analysis. She considered that some of the improvement in data around crime occurrences could be related to specific children who were no longer resident in a care home and requested an explanation behind the data in the report. The officer recognised that children moving might affect the data but was confident that the reductions in crime were mainly due to the well-matched children in care homes, strong child first management principles and the adherence to the CONCORDAT protocol. The committee recognised the almost 70% reduction in offences in all 4 homes over the last 12 months.

Another committee member asked about the techniques that CONCORDAT used. The officer explained that the Action Plan acted as a guide for staff. It was a 10-point check list and encouraged actions such as sending letters of apologies, clearing, and cleaning up damage. It would avoid escalation of minor offences and avoid unnecessary criminalisation of children in care. A councillor was concerned that children in care were seen to be getting away with transgressions. The officer explained that all the offences were low gravity, and it was a question of getting the balance correct.

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report.

20/23 Children's Rights Service Annual Report

The Chair agreed to defer this report to the next meeting.

MINUTES END