

**Corporate Parenting Sub Commission
14 February 2012**

Present: Councillor Bailey (Chair)
Councillors Bolton, F. Khan, Whitby and F. Winter

19/11 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Campbell.

20/11 Late items to be introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

21/11 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Whitby declared a personal interest as he was a foster carer for Derby City Council.

22/11 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the chair.

23/11 Fostering Ofsted Report

The Commission received a report from Katie Harris, Director of Specialist Services, on the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of the Fostering Service on 2 December 2011 and the consequent Action Plan.

It was reported that there had been a good outcome and that the “good” standard found in the previous inspection in 2008 had been maintained and in effect improved as Ofsted had strengthened its criteria. The service provision was found to be strong in all areas. Positive comments were recorded by the young people; the foster carers themselves and colleagues in other agencies and social work teams.

It was reported that the inspectors had made some minor recommendations to secure further improvements. The Commission commented on the recommendation to, “Ensure the manager undertakes training directly related to managing a fostering service.” It was reported that this had already been implemented.

The Commission also commented on the recommendation to, “Ensure fostering carers are given the opportunity to attend and be heard at all panel meetings at

which their approval is being discussed.” It was reported that there would be a review of the annual reviews process to achieve the recommendation.

Ellen Bird, Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer, drew the Commission’s attention to the Ofsted inspection report and mention of the Corporate Parenting Sub Commission. Ofsted recognised the establishment of the Commission as a recent improvement in helping children to make a positive contribution by providing co-ordination in this area.

The Director of Specialist Services reported that the Commission would receive a quarterly report on the fostering Service.

The Commission wished to congratulate the fostering staff for the work they did and noted that the Council had a good sound fostering service to be proud of. The Commission also wished to say well done to all foster carers.

Resolved:

- **to note the responses to the Ofsted recommendations to seek further improvement;**
- **to note that further progress would be reported in the Fostering Agency quarterly reports;**
- **to recommend that the social workers, foster carers and managers be commended for this excellent outcome in which their hard work has been recognised.**

24/11 Children Home Visit Protocol

The Commission received a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer on Children Home Visit Procedure. It was reported that although Members had visited children’s homes as part of their role as Corporate Parents the process for arranging visits, the visits, submitting their feedback and receiving responses to the feedback had never been formalised. The report set out a suggested procedure to streamline the process and agree appropriate timescales for receiving reports.

The Commission noted the importance of all Councillors having completed a CRB check before visiting a children’s home and having attended relevant Corporate Parenting training. It was agreed that these points should be inserted at the beginning of the protocol document. It was also recognised that all Members should take photo ID when visiting a home.

The Commission discussed the possibility of widening the scope of the visits to include children’s centres and family support centres. The Commission requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer investigated other centres that could be visited by Members.

Resolved:

- **to approve the procedure, with the addition that the following be**

inserted at the head of the document, “Prior to attending visit, all Councillors MUST have a completed CRB Check and have attended the relevant Corporate Parenting Training”;

- **to request that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer investigates other centres that could be visited by Members**

25/11 Children Home Visit Feedback

The Commission received a report from the Director of Specialist Services on Officer responses to Member comments resulting from children home visits.

The Commission discussed the format of the document. It was reported that Councillors feedback forms had not been included as some of them contained personal information. The Commission noted that it would be possible to have a report containing Councillors feedback forms if the report was marked as private.

The Commission requested that Mark Barrett be invited to the next meeting of the Commission. He was due to take over from Katie Harris as Director of Specialist Services upon her retirement.

The Commission discussed some of the Children’s home visits and said they were generally pleased with the provision of care. They were keen to continue to monitor areas that had been raised as concerns.

The Commission discussed the locked fire extinguishers at Bute Walk Children’s Home. The Director of Specialist Services reported that the fire officer would be contacted to look at other options, such as having a stock of fire blankets.

The Commission discussed whether the same Councillors should go back to a children’s home on a consecutive visit. It was agreed that different Councillors should go. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer reported that Councillors would be given an information pack before a visit that contained previous Councillor comments.

Resolved;

- **to note the report;**
- **to request that Mark Barrett, as the new Director of Specialist Services, be invited to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Sub Commission.**

26/11 Out of Hours Service for Foster Care

The Commission received a report from the Director of Specialist Services on out of hours support to children looked after. It was reported that Careline offers an out of hours emergency response service for both children’s and adult services across Derby, primarily ensuring the safety of the service user until the next working day when further responses and support can be offered by daytime

services.

The Commission discussed the out of hours service provided by Careline. It was reported that if foster carers have problems out of hours they could call Careline. It was noted that the service was operated by trained social workers.

The Commission raised concerns around the limited help that Careline could offer to foster carers. It was reported that social workers are not available to visit foster carers or young people out of hours.

The Director of Specialist Services explained that the Police are the emergency service to contact if foster carers have concerns that a young person is missing or somewhere that they should not be.

The Commission agreed that it would be good if social services could offer some hands on practical support out of hours. It was noted that Careline could offer advice but not a physical presence.

The Commission recognised the usefulness of developing a buddy system for new foster carers or fostering mentors.

The Commission agreed that it would be useful to find out what sort of calls Careline receives around fostering out of hours. The Director of Specialist Services explained that officers had been asked to provide this information.

The Commission agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer should organise for Members to attend one of the monthly foster carers coffee mornings and find out what they think about the out of hours service provided by Careline.

Resolved;

- **to request that the Director of Specialist Services collects information on the types of calls received out of hours regarding fostering and brings it to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Sub Commission;**
- **to request that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer will liaise with Councilor Whitby to try to organise for Members to attend a foster carers coffee morning to find out what foster carers think about the out of hours service provided by Careline.**

27/11 Scoping Report for Topic Review for full Children and Young People Commission

The Commission received a draft Scoping Report for Topic Review for Full Children and Young People Commission from the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer. It was reported that at its meeting on 22 January the Children and Young People Commission discussed their topic review choice for the municipal year 2011/12 and had chosen to look at "How can the Timescale for

Adoption at Derby City Council be improved?" The Commission had agreed that the work would be carried out by the full Commission and the Corporate Parenting Sub Commission.

It was reported that there were two central aims for the review:

1. To establish whether the timescales for adoption can be reduced
2. To ensure that this would have a positive impact upon the children cared for by Derby City Council

It was reported that there were eight objectives of the review:

1. To establish the current timescales for adoption
2. To examine where time savings could be made
3. To examine best practice in other Local Authorities
4. To explore the benefits of shortening adoption timescales
5. To explore whether there are disadvantages in shortening timescales for adoption
6. If possible, to consider any government recommendations regarding adoption timescales (Due to be released March 2012)
7. To establish whether there are sufficient resources to keep timescales as tight as possible.
8. To make recommendations to the Council Cabinet regarding adoption timescales

The Commission discussed the list of suggested witnesses to be called to give evidence. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer reported on the work that Harrow Council and its partner Coram were doing as their adoption process had been highlighted as best practice. It was suggested that if a representative was invited, it would be important to get a clear indication of how many children they offered their service to. It was agreed that an independent member of the Derby City Council Adoption Panel should be invited as a witness and that they should provide an information pack on process and timescales. It was suggested that the social worker witness should be experienced.

The Commission agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer should set dates for witness interviews.

Resolved:

- **to agree that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer should begin the topic review: How can the Timescale for Adoption at Derby City Council be improved;**
- **to agree that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer should set dates for witness interviews.**

28/11 Children in Care Council

The Chair of the Sub Commission and the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer reported on their visit to the Children in Care Council (CiCC) meeting on

11 January 2012. The Chair and officer gave a short presentation to the CiCC about how the Council takes decisions and how the Corporate Parenting Commission could support the CiCC with their work.

It was reported that if the CiCC had any issues that they felt the Sub Commission could help them with, they would contact the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer and those issues would be escalated as necessary.

It was reported that the Chair of the Sub Commission and the CiCC had agreed to share minutes of meetings with each other but the minutes of the CiCC would not appear on the Sub Commission's agenda. It was agreed that this was to avoid personal details within CiCC minutes being published.

Resolved to note the report.

MINUTES END