

ITEM 4

Time commenced 1.00pm

Time finished 2:20pm

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Tuesday 29th October 2019

Present: Councillor Williams (Chair)
Councillors Hezelgrave, Hussain and A Pegg

In attendance: One representative of the Children in Care Council
Patrick Aherne, Participation Officer
Steven Atkinson, Independent Chair of Derby & Derbyshire
Safeguarding Partnership
Katie Evans, Senior Commissioning Project Officer
Annemarie Johansson, Chair of Foster Care Association
Suanne Lim, Director of Children's Integrated Services
Sally Penrose, Head of Service and Panel Adviser - Fostering
Andy Smith, Strategic Director of People Services

13/19 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Pervez Akhtar, Corporate Parenting Lead, Heather Peet, Designated Nurse Looked After Children, Graeme Ferguson, Virtual School Head

14/19 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were none.

15/19 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

16/19 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record. The Board noted that the resolution to Cabinet on Page 2 regarding children and young people in broader consultation across the whole of the Council was agreed at Cabinet on 11 September 2019.

17/19 Children in Care Council – Update

The Committee received a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning which provided an update on recent activity by the Children in Care Council (CICC). The report was presented to members by a representative of the CICC.

Councillors noted that since the last report there has been one meeting of the CICC in September. There was no meeting in July at the request of CICC, due to summer holidays.

September's meeting was attended by the Children's Rights Service (CRS). They talked about the advocacy support that it offers to young people in care. The CICC were asked to review a service leaflet; any feedback would be used in the creation of a new leaflet. The CICC also began work on a dictionary of appropriate words for use by professionals when talking to young people about their care. It was planned to bring this dictionary to the next Corporate Parenting meeting. The Independent Chair of Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Partnership suggested that this dictionary would be useful for other organisations and asked if it could be more widely circulated.

A Celebration event for children in care, which recognises individual achievements, was also discussed; categories could include "Best Take Over" Day and "Improving Creativity" amongst others. The Board were informed that it was planned to run Forum Event for Care Leavers on 13 November 2019; the Chair offered her assistance to locate a venue if one could not be found. The CICC representative invited members of the Corporate Parenting Board to attend the next meeting of the CICC on 6 November 2019. The Board were informed that planning was taking place for a Takeover Day, in either November or December, to offer Children in Care, (CIC) the opportunity to work alongside people in decision-making roles.

The Committee were informed that a planning meeting with Derby Theatre had taken place to identify topic areas for Care Leavers for an eight week engagement programme to run in November and December. The Participation Officer would be attending some future sessions. The Board noted that approximately 10 – 15 care leavers had attended a summer event in the Peak District in August and that a further visit was planned to take place during the Christmas period.

The Committee were concerned that not all CIC had been involved in the CICC. The officer from the Fostering Service and the Chair of the Fostering Association offered to email out information about CICC to their CIC to promote involvement.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to consider the content of the report and feedback from CICC and engagement with Care Leavers

18/19 Children's Placement Overview Report

The Committee received a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning. The report was presented by the Commissioning Manager. The Board noted the importance of having in place safe accommodation and support for young people. They were informed by the officers that Derby City Council (DCC) has lists of providers on compliant framework agreements in place. These providers have proved that they are able to offer safe accommodation and good support. Different lists are used for providers who offer fostering, children's homes and provision for young people of 16-17 years to live in a property with support from social care or other organisations. The Committee noted the three frameworks used to source these placements are:

- East Midlands Regional Children's Framework (EMRCF) - for Fostering and Children's Homes. This framework would be replaced by the D2N2 Children in Care Framework from 1 February 2020.
- Accommodation and Support Framework for 16-17 year olds - for semi independent placements and support accommodation
- Nottinghamshire DPS – for semi independent placements for 16-17 year olds with complex needs.

The Committee noted that the "One Stop Shop" Commissioning Service supports the operational teams within Children's Social Care and Early Help to find the best placement to meet the needs of children and young people. Placements can be sourced both from external and internal providers. The range of placements currently made by the service include:

- Internal Fostering and internal Children's Homes – to keep Derby children as close as possible (within 20 miles of the City Centre).
- External fostering (through Independent Fostering Agencies) IFAs

The Officer advised the numbers of each type of placement. It was noted that both External Fostering and External semi-independent placements had risen in number.

Fostering and Children's Homes placements are currently made via the East Midlands Regional Children's Framework. The placements are made through a matching process, working in partnership with social care. This framework also provides Mother/Father & Baby placements which are often placed with a foster home that has carers able to support all parties. External fostering placements will be sourced through the newly established D2N2 Children in Care Placements Framework.

The Committee noted that semi-independent placements are sourced via the Accommodation and Support Framework for 16-17 year olds. This framework offers accommodation and support with over six different providers within and around Derby City. A member queried how DCC can ensure that providers will do what they say; how were they being checked to ensure the young person was supported and their needs were being met. The officer confirmed that meetings with providers took place on a six weekly basis where the quality of provision was discussed and reviews of individual packages were undertaken. The packages provided are outcome focused and quality audit visits are undertaken.

Members asked if there were differences between providers and the officer confirmed that some specialist services are provided in certain groups. A member queried whether children leaving care are asked to complete an Exit Questionnaire; it was confirmed that there was a standardised questionnaire across the framework to compare provision. Members asked about the type of accommodation provided and it was confirmed that there was a mix of accommodation available which ranged from solo flats, shared flats, or a hub situation. This flexibility and movement allows placement of different needs in different accommodation sites.

Members noted the continued increase in the number of all types of external placements made over the last six years, which has impacted on the overall cost of placements. The increase was mainly due to the increasing numbers and increasing complexity of young peoples needs, as well as a shortage of local foster carers together with an increased number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children

coming to Derby City. The number of semi-independent placements has increased from 44 placements costing £0.6m in March 2016, to 74 placements costing over £1.3m in March 2019. Members noted that placements were being monitored and should be reducing by next year.

The committee noted that the average costs of external placements are:

- Foster placement £600-£1640 per week
- Children's Home placement £2,625 - £6,210 per week; this can go up to £7,000 per week if the young person's needs are high
- Secure placement £6,000 per week

The committee were informed that spend on external placements was a priority area for People's Services and will continue to be reviewed closely to ensure it meets needs and gives best value for money. Changes to the Framework specification and financial boundaries from February 2020 will enable negotiation of placement fees through a core place cost (capped) and a menu of optional extras.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to consider the content of the report.

19/19 Update East Midlands Regional Children's Framework

The Committee received a report of the Director of Integrated Commissioning. The report provided Derby City Corporate Parenting Committee with an update on the East Midlands Regional Children's Framework. The Commissioning Manager attended the meeting to give the update.

The Committee noted the importance for DCC to have in place safe accommodation and support for children and young people. The officer reported that when a decision has been made to accommodate a child or young person a placement can be sourced via both internal or external providers. To help source placements external providers from a compliant framework like Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) or Independent Children's Homes are used. These providers have to prove they can offer safe accommodation and good support. The decision on the type of placement made depends on a range of factors, which include the child's needs, quality, cost and availability. This report gives an overview of the changes in the East Midlands Regional Framework (EMRF), which is the current way external placements are sourced and is due to end in January 2020. A review of the effectiveness of the framework showed that the current arrangements were not helping the Council to meet the increasing challenge of getting enough external placements. The results of the review have led to the design of the new framework called D2N2 Children in Care (CIC) Framework by Nottinghamshire County, Derby City, Derbyshire County and Nottingham City Councils'.

The Officer reported that the review of the EMRF identified a number of issues, local and national, which made it ineffective in sourcing local provision. These included amongst others:

- Competition with other Local Authorities (outside of D2N2) for securing placements in, and within 20 mile of, Derby city using the same framework
- Saturation of foster carers in the wider market

- Increasing and changing needs of children and young people
- Increasing numbers of children in care, placing demand pressure on external and internal providers

The Committee noted that a move to smaller, collaborative commissioning arrangements with D2N2 partners would support the aim of building local provider relationships, help to strengthen placement offers and increase local sufficiency. The D2N2 Framework has a core offer and menu of services, each able to support different behaviours and needs, helping to provide a tailored support package for each young person. Providers are currently applying to join the D2N2 CIC Framework through a competitive process. Providers have to meet high quality standards and are vetted on the quality of their support and provision. Members were concerned that checks were in place to ensure providers gave the same standard of services. The officers confirmed there were, however some services, although of the same quality and standard, may be delivered in a different way. The committee requested an up date report be brought back to the committee towards the end of the second quarter of the next financial year

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved:

- 1. to consider the content of the report**
- 2. to request that a report be brought back to the committee towards the end of the second quarter of the next financial year to give an update.**

20/19 Inspection and Monitoring of Children's Homes

The committee received a report of the Service Director for Early Help and Children's Social Care. The report provided the Corporate Parenting Committee with an update on the Inspection and Monitoring of Children's Homes.

The committee noted that Children's Homes are regulated and inspected by Ofsted, as required by the Care Standards Act 2000. Under the framework, judgements are made on:

- Overall progress and experiences of children and young people
- How well children and young people are helped and protected
- The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Homes are judged according to a four point scale: outstanding, good, requires improvement, inadequate. It was noted that there had been 13 visits since the last report and at the time of this meeting that all of DCC Children's Homes are rated as "Good"

The Committee were informed that Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 requires each home to be visited by an employee of the organisation not directly concerned with the conduct of the home, and a report to be written. Reports of the visits are sent to Homes Manager who respond to any recommendations. The reports are circulated to Ofsted, Responsible Managers and Democratic Services. The Committee noted that no major issues had been identified in these visits, but there were some small issues in one home about strategies to provide young people with support when a tutor is not able to provide home tuition, and that young people in the home were sometimes unwilling to participate in education.

Elected Members also carry out periodic visits to children's home to monitor the quality of care and the welfare of children and young people; these visits fall within members' corporate parenting responsibilities. The Committee noted that since the change of administration in May 2019, no member visits have been undertaken across Children's Homes but training has been given to all Members to enable visits to take place in future.

The officer highlighted that children's homes provide stable accommodation. However, it was within the council's gift to be looking at alternative, more creative accommodation routes for Looked After Children (LAC). Currently the council was in the process of agreeing, with the help of Derby Homes, transition homes, for LAC of 16-18 years to move into, preparing them to live independently with the help, support and guidance of staff. A committee member described work underway using Housing Revenue Account funding to invest in housing stock for the city which was specifically designed and built for young people. The committee noted that it was hoped to see some good results by the end of next year.

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, as visits are undertaken by elected members as part of the Council's Corporate Parent duties.**
- 3. To request a report on the number of hours of education (Tuition Hours) provided in Children's Homes**
- 4. To request a report on the current processes, procedures and strategies in place for young people in Children's Homes who are unwilling to participate in education.**

21/19 Fostering Agency Report

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services. The report was presented by the Head of Service Fostering. The report covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 and provides an update on the work undertaken by the Fostering Service, explaining how the fostering service recruits new foster carers through social media channels, DCC Website and targeted events. The report also explains the role of the fostering panel and provides data about the number of carers approved, and the number of carers who have left the service. Complaints about foster carers are also included.

The Committee noted that during 2018/19 one of the main developments was the strategic plan set out within a programme of work under the remit of the Corporate Fostering Recruitment Board. One workstream focused on the recruitment of foster carers by improving DCC's marketing and sales approach and streamlining the assessment process. Key areas of improvement have been to increase DCC's presence on social media by using Google Ads, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Another workstream focused on the retention of foster carers.

The Committee were informed that the Fostering Panel has a key role in the provision and monitoring of foster care for children. The Panel meets two times per

month and was supported by a professional advisor (Head of Service); it also has access to a specialist adult medical advisor and legal advice, as needed. The Agency Decision Maker is the Service Director for Childrens Integrated Services. The Panel provides a quality assurance (QA) role to the fostering service provider on the quality of reports and practice.

The officer reported that Safeguarding was very much at the centre of panel discussions. Between April 2017 and March 2018 there was only one referral made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Diversity issues are considered in relation to each assessment, report or review and all panel members have attended relevant training.

The Committee were informed that the central role in hearing the voice of the child can be difficult to achieve if the necessary paperwork was missing, especially via the child's social worker or lack of information from a child's review. This was an ongoing concern and has been raised with the panel advisor. The officer confirmed that quality audits had been put in place around missing paperwork.

The Committee noted that in cases of emergency placements, children and young people have been placed with foster carers who do not meet the approval criteria recommended by panel. The officer confirmed that all referrals go to the Community Team first and panel are aware of placements which are above foster carers approval criteria.

The officer reported on the Recruitment Activity for Foster Carers. As at September 2019 there had been 7 mainstream approvals, 21 mainstream assessments are currently being undertaken, and there were 6 outstanding applications, giving a predicted figure of 34 new foster carers. The potential forecast for Family & Friends approvals was 8. The Committee noted the analysis of recruitment events (at 4.8.2 in the report) held in May and September 2019. The officer informed the Committee that additional enquiries received via Facebook and Twitter had made a huge difference.

The officer reported that there were a total of 25 de-registrations presented at panel between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. The majority of de-registrations were due to carers making the decision to retire. DCC make every effort to retain the skills and experience of foster carers who leave, and discuss with them possibilities of taking on a different type of foster care role.

The Chair thanked Panel for the work they continue to undertake and acknowledged the intense, emotional nature of the job. The rise in numbers of foster carers being recruited was welcomed as it went some way to balance the de-registrations. The Foster Carer Association (FCA) were also thanked for all their support.

The Corporate Parenting Committee resolved to approve the annual Fostering Agency report and Statement of Purpose.

MINUTES END