

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE MEETING (FORMAL)
HELD AT 6:00PM, ON
WEDNESDAY, 17 MARCH 2021
VIRTUAL MEETING ON ZOOM, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillor Bisby, (Chairman (Chair)), Lane (Vice Chairman), Councillors Ayres, Bashir, S Bond, Jones, Harper, Haynes, Robinson and Yasin.

Officers Present: Nicola Curley, Assistant Director Children's Services
Myra O'Farrell, Head of Service Corporate Parenting
Fiona Van Den Hout, Head of Service Fostering and Contact Service
Ricky Cooper, Assistant Director, Fostering, Regional Adoption and Specialist Children Services
Dr Aslam, Doctor for Looked After Children
Shalina Chandoo, Quality Assurance Lead (Participation and Independent Visiting)
Catherine York, Designated Nurse, Children in Care
Alison Bennett, Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Support Services
Karen S Dunleavy, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: Stephen Greene, Foster Carer Forum Representative
Sue Stepney, Foster Carer Forum Representative

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. Update from the Foster Carer Forum

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to updates from the Foster Carer Forum.

The purpose of the report was to update the Committee about the activities of the Foster Carer Forum (FCF). The FCF representative thanked the finance team and asked for the

special occasion payments to be brought forward. In addition, COVID-19 vaccinations had been given to foster carers, which had made them feel very valued.

The Foster Carer Representative introduced the report and asked Members to note the contents and raise any queries they had with representatives.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members were advised that there were only three sets of carers that moved to Cambridge County Council (CCC), no others could be moved.
- The children in care and care leaver appointments with Social Workers and Personal Advisors would be better attended once they felt more included about decisions being made for them.
- Members were advised that although carers could move to CCC the offer was the same as Peterborough.
- There had better attendance at health appointments from CiC and CLs as a result of these being made virtual. Some however, remained difficult to engage with.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimously) to note the contents.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report.

5. Children in Care Council Participation Report

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the work of the Children in Care Council and the outcome of their discussions at meetings and events organised. In addition, Members were provided with feedback on the coming into care packs created by the CiCC.

The purpose of the report was to update Members on the Children in Care Council activities and participation services.

The Youth Voice Coordinator introduced the report and asked Members to note the update and raise any queries they had with officers.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members were advised that the CiCC had put together a proforma for Members to complete should they wish to attend their meetings. Members would be invited to attend a meeting once the CiCC receive the application. The Chair advised that he had attended a meeting and the experience was valuable.
- Members congratulated the CiCC on their work with mental health awareness for Children and Young People in Care.
- The CiCC had requested that Social Workers complete a proforma to produce a 'Getting to Know You' card for children in care. The idea was for the child to learn more about their new Social Worker.
- The Chair of Corporate Parenting commented that it was good to see that CiC and CLs had challenged Council services.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimously) to note the contents.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report.

6. Annual Health Report

The Corporate Parenting Committee received an annual report in relation to the Health Services for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

The purpose of the report was to provide an overview of the Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) activities to ensure robust monitoring and quality assurance systems were in place to meet the health needs of the Looked after Children population in Peterborough.

The Designated Nurse, Children in Care introduced the report and asked Members to note the content and raise any queries they had with officers.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members were advised that Health Assessments and GP (General Practitioners) consultations conducted virtually during the Covid 19 pandemic had been a part of the service that could continue. It would also be beneficial for CiC and CLs that had not lived locally.
- The team had emailed a word version of the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQs) to carers however, there were other pressures that impacted on the low return rates. There was a plan in place with social workers and other colleagues to improve these figures, however it was felt that face to face appointments would improve returns.
- Members were advised that dental appointments were impacted by Covid 19, but arrangements were returning to normal. There had been an issue pre Covid of getting children registered, however, there had also been an emergency service available for children in care. Members were also advised that there had sometimes been difficulty experienced with some practitioners not being fully aware of CiC needs and anyone with concerns should contact the Health Team.
- The drop in performance highlighted at 4.4.3 of the report, had been due to sickness with GP paediatricians and therefore capacity was not at its fullest position.
- Blood borne screening and vaccinations were in place for asylum seeking children. There would be an audit undertaken as standard practice, which would provide assurances to Members.
- Members were advised that CiC and CLs would only be sent to the Ely dental practice if their normal practice could not offer an appointment when needed. The service in Ely was a backup service, which was on offer through NHS England.
- Consent for treatment was integral to service provision for CiC and CLs and this was usually obtained from the corporate parent or whoever had responsibility for the child. This could be a Social Worker; however, the Health Team would also ensure that the child was asked if they agreed to the treatment.
- Unaccompanied asylum seeker children in care were always given clear guidance on treatment being offered and care was taken as they could be quite traumatised by their experience and therefore, reluctant to engage. There were no cases where UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children) had not received treatment or tests they needed. This process had also been added into their pathway plan.
- Interpreters were used for UASC, and their placements would be with families that shared their language.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimous) to note the report.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee agreed to note the report.

7. REPORT ON THE FINAL STRUCTURE FOR CLINICAL OFFER FOR CIC

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the structure for the clinical offer for Children in Care (CiC).

The purpose of the report was to update Members of the progress in the mobilisation of the clinical team and the offer available to children in care in Peterborough, following the service being brought in house. Members were also advised that recruitment had been initiated and it was hoped that permanent staff would be in post very soon.

The Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Support Services introduced the report and asked Members to note the contents and raise any queries with officers.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members were advised that there had been several interim posts in place, however the job vacancies had only been placed recently. Members were also advised that the service was confident that they would receive several applications.
- Members were advised that the trauma-based approach outlined in 4.6.1 of the report involved support to carers to help a child in care in a sensitive and reflective way, in order to help them with their recovery and build resilience. For example, if a child misbehaved and was sent to their bedroom, the approach could initiate a feeling of neglect, which they had experienced in the past. The foster carer would be taught a different approach that encouraged them to find out why the child had displayed certain behaviour, therefore avoiding the feeling of neglect for the child.
- A plan would be developed with the foster carers to support the child and the most appropriate training would be offered such as a Foundation for Attachment Course.
- A holistic clinical and training package for children in care with trauma issues was being offered across both authorities to maintain resilience for foster carers. There had also been several experienced foster carers that could offer training and guidance to other foster carers that might experience very complex issues with children in their care.
- Members were advised that there had been funding expected from the Government to support CiC with mental health needs, whilst at schools and it was felt that this would provide a consistent approach to the children experiencing trauma issues such as neglect.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimous) to note the report.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee agreed to note the report and agreed that the Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Support Service would explore whether there was an opportunity to extend the trauma framework training approach to schools to ensure that there was a consistent approach to the methods being delivered and provide Members with an update.

8. REPORT TO CONFIRM NEW REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY AND FOSTERING STRUCTURES

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the new regional adoption agency and fostering structures.

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update on the new arrangements for delivering adoption and fostering services for Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Councils.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care introduced the report and asked Members to note the report and raise any queries with officers.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members were advised that the Fostering Service changes had been met with the usual challenges such as with IT and putting together performance data sets. There had also been some challenges for carers and adopters however most had been fully receptive to the changes. Members were also advised that it was important to hear the voices of carers, as these would help shape the service going forward.
- Members were advised that there had been a good communications strategy to attract foster carers as well as adopters and that the offer had been the same for both.
- Members were advised that the figures for adoption for Peterborough were doing well compared to national figures and a report would be presented to the Committee in due course.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimous) to note the report.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee agreed to note the report.

9. PERFORMANCE DATA FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS JANUARY 2021

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to performance data in for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

The purpose of the report was to update Members in respect of the numbers of children and young people being looked after by the Council as of 31 January 2021 by providing a breakdown of the types of placements in which they were living. The report also provided information about the age, gender and ethnicity of those children and young people. Members were also advised that caseloads were a little higher than preferred. In addition, there had been some delays in adoption orders through the courts.

The Assistant Director Children Services introduced the report and asked Members to note the contents and raise any queries with officers.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members were advised that there had been a greater interest for adoption in both Peterborough and Cambridge authorities. This had been achievable due to a faster recruitment assessment. There were challenges finding the right adopters for children with additional needs of all ages. There had also been a slight delay on

processing applications for adoption due to staffing however, this was back on track. In addition, there had also been a delay in obtaining adoption orders through the courts. This combination of issues had contributed to the decrease in performance figures.

- The caseload figures would depend on the type of placement and how much work would need to be carried out by the social worker, however 18 cases would be an ideal target figure.
- Members were advised that the staffing vacancy figure was at 0.5 full time equivalent which was positive, and this was due to the efforts of a strong management team.
- Placement stability had decreased over the last year and work had been underway to hold stability meetings and increase recourses much earlier in these cases. There had been some young people in care that had experienced multiple breakdowns, due to their challenges. It was anticipated that this anomaly would improve in the next financial year.
- Members were advised that there had been some issues with the completion of Pathway plans over the last quarter and it was felt that this was due to holding these meetings virtually. Face to face meetings would be reinstated and the team were confident that the position would improve.
- There had been more CiC and YP (Young People) placed outside of the county with agency carers than preferred, however, there had been a range of circumstances such as carers that live just out of the Peterborough area. There had been a need to recruit new carers to avoid out of county placements and three new households for Peterborough had been recruited recently. It was felt that the new care offer and increase in rates would improve the recruitment figures.
- The Foster Carer Forum Representative commented that existing carers could be used to recruit to new carers. Members were advised that a greater incentive needed to be provided to increase new recruitment.
- It was preferred for children in care under the age of one years old to live with their birth families, however, where this was not possible, adoption would be included in their care plan.
- Members were advised that the family safeguarding model in Peterborough was successful, however there was a peak of 396 children and young people in the year. Despite the increase, the service had been considered good for the region. The team offered a coherent service through family safeguarding to avoid children having to be placed in care in the first place. It was also advised that child protection plans had increased during the pandemic. There was a concern about this increase, however this would be audited. In the main, Peterborough had positive results for safeguarding and other authorities had been in contact with Peterborough to learn this success.
- Members were advised that the YP in unsuitable care related to a small number and the reasons had been complexed such as placement in a custodial sentence, YP living outside of the area or were extremely hard to engage with. Members were also advised that the issue was being monitored.
- Members were advised that there were Blitz courts that were dealing with a backlog of children's care proceeding across the country and it was thought that these courts could look at adoption hearings to help clear that backlog. Peterborough was contributing to data on the issue to highlight where the blockage was in the court system, however, it was not seen as a significant enough issue to start using Blitz courts for adoption hearings.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimous) to note the report.

AGREED ACTIONS

1. The Corporate Parenting Committee agreed to note the report.

10. Members Issues

Members that were not part of the core CPC membership, but held corporate parenting responsibilities, were invited raise issues they had with regard to the services provided to Children in Care (CiC).

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered and **RESOLVED** that there were no issues to raise.

11. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting dates will be decided at the Annual Council meeting on 17th May 2021.

CHAIRMAN
6:00 – 7:27 PM

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