

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE MEETING (FORMAL)
HELD AT 6:00PM, ON
WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2020
VIRTUAL MEETING ON ZOOM, PETERBOROUGH**

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

Officers Present: Nicola Curley, Assistant Director Children's Services
Myra O'Farrell, Head of Corporate Parenting
Sue King, Head of Service Permanency Services
Shalina Chandoo, Quality Assurance Lead
Karen Lloyd, Participation Officer
Sarah Hamilton, Head of Safeguarding People, (Incorporating Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children)
Katherine York, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children
Marya Ali, Youth Voice Worker
Dee Glover, Head of Virtual Schools
Michaela Berry, Group Manager: Corporate Parenting Peterborough
Joe Gilbert, Specialist Personal Adviser
Marie Saunders, Deputy Safeguarding Lead
Linda Conroy, IRO and CP Independent Chair
Jane Webb, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Karen S Dunleavy, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: Stephen Greene, Foster Carer Forum Representative
Jenny Winters, Foster Carer Forum Representative

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bashir.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2019 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 the recent activities and outcomes of the Foster Carer Forum meetings. Members were also advised of the training event that could not go ahead and an extra payment for foster carers.

The purpose of the report was to receive an update at formal committee meetings of discussions and actions from the Foster Carers Forum.

The Head of Service Permanency Services introduced the report and asked Members to note the update.

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

- Members recognised the dedication and importance of Foster Carers especially in relation to the impact of COVID-19.
- Members raised concerns about the Staying Put Policy notice period and the transport issues in relation to communications, organisation and Covid-19 safe journeys.
- Members were advised that it was intended that the Staying Put Policy to be a contractual arrangement and in some cases this arrangement had been successful, however some had not. A review of the policy was currently underway and the issues raised would be taken into account.
- Members were advised that the approach to home to school transport for Children in Care during the Covid-19 period, had been thought about carefully in order to manage a difficult situation.
- Members commented about the mental health support provided through the Covid-19 lockdown period.
- The Foster Carer Forum Representative advised that the extra support provided and the extra payment made by the Authority was welcomed by all foster carers.

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

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report and raised concerns with lead officers. The Committee also agreed that:

- i) The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Skills and the University would explore the issues with transport and staying put policy notice period within the report and discuss these with the Assistant Director.
- ii) The Assistant Director of Children's Services would raise the transport issues with the Executive Director of Education.
- iii) The Assistant Director of Children's Services and the Head of Corporate Parenting would review the Staying Put Policy as part of the general policy reviews in this area.

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 informed about the progress of coming into care packs, saying goodbye cards and collaborative partnership work with Cambridgeshire County Council.

The purpose of the report was to request the Committee to consider and note the contents in relation to updates from the Children in Care Council and participation services.

The Youth Voice Worker introduced the item to Members and asked them 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 survey feedback from YP in care included comments such as how they generally felt going back to school, support from social workers, good contact with IRO's, good support particularly in achieving their education goals. One young person highlighted that they would like more support.
- Members congratulated the Children in Care Council on a clear report to the Committee.
- Members commented about the good work undertaken by the participation team throughout the Covid – 19 with pandemic.

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

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee agreed to note the report.

6. APPOINTMENT OF CHAMPION MEMBERS

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to Corporate Parenting Champion Member appointments.

The purpose of the report was to review the current Corporate Parenting Champions positions and allocations, which was in line with the recent Cabinet and Committee changes made at Council on 29 July 2020.

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and asked Members to confirm the positions and appointments of Corporate Parenting Champions.

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

- The Cabinet Members for Children's Services, Education, Skills and the University asked for the Recreation and Leisure Activities position, once appointed, to incorporate the support on offer through the Music Hub.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimously) to confirm the positions and appointments.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee confirmed positions and appointments as follows:

- i) Housing, Finance and Benefits - Councillor Sandra Bond
- ii) Education Employment and Training and Access to Higher Education - Councillor Bashir
- iii) Health - Councillor Robinson
- iv) Recreation and Leisure Activities – Vacant
- v) Effective Care Planning - Councillor Jones

7. **A REPORT ON EDUCATION PROVISION DURING LOCKDOWN, ATTAINMENT AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN**

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the education provision during Covid-19 lockdown.

The purpose of the report was to provide information in respect of the education of children and young people in care during the closure of schools during the national lockdown, attainment of 2020 cohort and education provision for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASCs).

The Head of Virtual Schools introduced the report and asked Members to note the contents and raise any concerns with lead officers.

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

- Members were advised at the start of the lockdown a survey was conducted to establish which children in care and young people had access to a laptop to continue their education. The Virtual Head had encouraged schools to purchase laptops using pupil premium. Laptops were also available through the DFE. It was confirmed that despite some delays with issuing laptop equipment, all children and young people in care had been allocated and could retain these indefinitely.
- The Virtual School had received confirmation from education providers over the work being allocated to children and young people in care during the lockdown. This could be evidenced through the CiC and YPs personal education plan process, which was monitored by the team. There had been challenges at the start of the pandemic such as a delay in issuing the education packs and the children's enthusiasm to learn online, however these obstacles had been overcome.
- The Virtual Head was content with the attendance results that had been achieved during the pandemic lockdown period. The Government had stated that some children and young people need to go into school during the lockdown. There had been a children's tracker which identified those who needed to be in school. Peterborough had been above the national average in attendance for CIC and YP in care.
- Recent feedback received had outlined that children had enjoyed being at home, in addition this had been shared with carers. Members were also advised that CIC would be assessed to see where the education gaps were.
- Members were advised that 3.6% children had been absent from school, which was thought to be a positive figure.
- Members were advised that successful results had been achieved for some children in care that had been placed into small social bubbles, rather than being overwhelmed by bigger classes prior to the pandemic.
- The Foster Carer Forum (FCF) representative thanked the Virtual School support during lockdown. The FCF representative also commented that the opportunity had made carers more aware of the education being undertaken by their children and the level that they were at.
- The Foster Carer Forum representative also commented that children had been able to develop relationships with teachers in a better way as a result of the Covid-19 due to the rules around smaller group numbers.

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

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee agreed to note the report.

8. UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE FOR OUR CARE LEAVERS IN RELATION TO IMPACT OF COVID

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to university experiences for care leavers in relation to the impact of COVID-19.

The purpose of the report was to update Members about the university experience for Peterborough's Care Leavers in relation to the impact of Covid-19 and what services had been put in place to mitigate these impacts. The approach had also involved pooled resources with Cambridge County Council to support Care Leavers.

The Head of Corporate Parenting introduced the report and asked Members to note the update, raise any concerns they had with lead officers and make any recommendations they felt appropriate.

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

- Members were advised that where there had been no Staying Put contract arrangement for a Care Leaver (CLs) or any other benefit support, financial support was however, provided during the lockdown period.
- Personal Advisors (PAs) had continued to provide the 'staying in touch' service to CLs during the Covid-19 lockdown period. The standard support arrangement was eight weeks; however, Peterborough had conducted these appointments on a more regular basis utilising a virtual approach. It was positive to learn that some Care Leavers had reengaged with their PAs during the lockdown period to avoid loneliness; and it was thought that engagement had increase as a result of using the virtual platforms.
- There were 23 Care Leavers in different stages of their education, however it was believed that none of the students had not passed their exams to secure a university placement as a result of the pandemic.

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

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report and agreed that:

1. The Head of Virtual Schools would provide the Committee with the current exam results for Care Leavers.

9. CARE LEAVER OFFER AND APPRENTICESHIP AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES UPDATE

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the local offer for Care Leavers.

The purpose of the report was to advise Members of the Local Offer for Care Leavers, including the impact of Covid-19 and what services had been put in place to mitigate the impact.

The Group Manager: Corporate Parenting Peterborough and Specialist Personal Adviser introduced the report and asked Members to note the update, raise any concerns with officers and make any recommendations they felt appropriate.

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

- The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education, Skills and the University complimented the team about the apprenticeship and opportunities work being undertaken.
- Members asked about the financial gap that was being experienced for the Kick Start Scheme. The Head of Corporate Parenting advised that this was a national issue and that it was difficult for Care Leavers as there was lack of support with the benefits scheme and as soon as they started working, they were responsible for their home bills. However, it was encouraged for CLs to follow their aspirations.
- The PAs contact with CLs had been valuable and using the virtual platforms was something that would stay in place, however, it would not replace a face to face visit. In addition, it was advised that the virtual platform opportunity had saved a lot of time for PAs as there was no need to travel around the country to conduct visits.
- The Assistant Director of Children in Care advised Members that there had been a change in the Children Act during the pandemic to allow certain temporary easements to services for children in care, but there were a number of continuing challenges to this. There was a statutory duty for LAs to keep in touch with young people in care and it had been anticipated that this arrangement would revert shortly. The caseloads for PAs were currently manageable, however would need to be reviewed in due course.
- Members commented that the Girl Guide association would be a good initiative to put forward as Corporate Aunts and Uncles.
- Members were advised that the service would want to be in a position to offer a choice in terms of contact for CLs with PAs. The preferred method would be achievable for some care leavers and children in care, however there was a statutory duty to ensure safeguarding, which meant that most arrangements would revert back to the provision before the COVID-19 pandemic period.

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

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report and agreed that:

1. The Specialist Personal Adviser would contact Councillor Bond in relation to the offer around the creation of links with the Girl Guide association to become part of the Corporate Aunts and Uncles initiative for Care Leavers.

10. REPORT ON WORK OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE FOR THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2019-2020

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to an annual report on the role of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

The purpose of the report addressed all areas of the Children in Care pledge and the Care Leavers’ Charter. It specifically demonstrated to Scrutiny how the Committee had addressed the increase in the Children in Care population; the changes to the partnership with TACT; and Children in Care and Care Leavers’ education and training needs.

The Assistant Director for Children's Services introduced the report and asked Members to agree that the annual report was an accurate reflection of the work of the Committee over the last 12 months and to submit the annual report to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee for noting as per the Corporate Parenting Committee's Terms of Reference.

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

- Members commented that Corporate Parenting Champion briefing notes were submitted throughout the year and this should be reflected within the report.
- The Chairman thanked the Champions for all the work they had undertaken during 2019/2020.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimously) to approve the report for submission to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee, subject to the mention of the Corporate Champion Member briefing contributions.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee agreed:

- i) The Assistant Director for Children's Services would update the report to reflect the briefing note contributions from Corporate Champion Members;
- ii) Subject to the amendments in relation to Corporate Champion Members briefing note contributions, the annual report was an accurate reflection of the work of the Committee over the last 12 months; and
- iii) To submit the annual report to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee for noting as per the Corporate Parenting Committee's Terms of Reference.

11. ANNUAL REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the IRO Annual Report.

The purpose of this report was to provide a statutory review and analysis of the Independent Reviewing Service.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead introduced the report and asked Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee note the content and raise any queries with the lead officers.

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

- The use of technology had been successful in terms of engagement with children and young people in care. This had been important for IROs to keep relationships going.
- Members commented that the IRO role was an important one in terms of maintaining contact and delivering processes.
- The IRO team aimed to consult with all children and young people in care where possible for their pre review meetings. The data was collected in two ways as a whole cohort of children in care, and comparable data for children over the age of four. Sometimes the meetings would take place over virtual platform and this was an area that the team were trying to drive. Regularity of IRO support for families was maintained and it was rare to have to reallocate cases.

- Members complimented the IRO team in relation to the 100% success rate of children over the age of four that had engaged in their review to some degree, which informed the shaping of their care plan.
- The IRO team encouraged children and young people in care to chair or co-chair their review meetings and this helped to build up the children's confidence. This would be encouraged by asking children and young people in care to read out the agenda for their meeting. Some young people could be very vocal in their review meetings and tested the professionals at the meeting. In addition, the team planned to hold conversations with children and young people in care on how they would like their review to run and how their confidence could be encouraged further.
- Members were advised that the decrease in professional staff feedback forms was because some had lots of paperwork to undertake. In addition, it was advised that the feedback forms would only be provided if requested. Despite the drop in figures, feedback received had been qualitative and really helpful to the IRO team.
- The Chairman of Corporate Parenting Committee advised that the Children in Care Council had been invited to co-chair the informal committee meetings and that this had been very successful in terms of their growth in confidence at each meeting.
- The caseload rise outlined within the report of 50-70 had been captured over a twelve-month period and some IROs had caseloads that had fluctuated in number. Generally, the caseloads for IROs was static over the course of the year and monitoring of their cases was undertaken during the year.
- There had been a small spike of children and young people coming into care, however generally the numbers would be static within five to ten cases. The IRO service was very effective and all service areas for children and young people in care were scrutinised and monitored very well.
- Members commented that it was important to gain an understanding of staff caseloads to ensure their well-being, in order to continue to maintain support for children in care.

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

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee agreed to note the report and raise any queries with lead officers.

12. PERFORMANCE DATA FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS SEPTEMBER 2020

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to Children in Care and Care Leaver placements.

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with an overview in respect of the numbers of children and young people currently being looked after by the Authority and to provide 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. The Assistant Director Children's Services introduced the report and requested Members to note the content and raise any queries they had with lead officers.

AGREED ACTIONS

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

12. a **PERFORMANCE – HEALTH REPORT**

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the Health service provision 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. In addition, an update was provided about the recruitment to the Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children position, the regular health care meetings held with Peterborough City Council officers, the operational teams and the October health assessment figure improvements.

The Head of Safeguarding People, (Incorporating Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children) introduced the report and asked Members to note the contents and raise any queries they had with lead officers.

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

13. **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.

14. **DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2020/2021 AND REVIEW OF WORK IN 2019/20**

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the review of the Committee's work in 2019/2020 and the draft work programme for 2020/2021.

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with the opportunity to discuss the Committee's objectives and priorities for 2020/2021 and to approve the draft work programme for 2019/20. The report also provided the Committee with the opportunity to review its work conducted throughout the municipal year 2019/20.

The Democratic Services Officer and Assistant Director Children's Services introduced the report and requested Members to note the content of the report and raise any queries they had with lead officers.

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

- Members asked about the mental health item as a result of an action point raised in November 2019. It was advised that the report would be received at the March 2021 formal meeting.

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

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered and **RESOLVED** (Unanimously) to note the report and approved the work Programme for 2020/2021.

15. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

20 January 2021 - (Informal)

17 March 2021 – (formal)

CHAIRMAN
6:00pm – 7:50pm