

**CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Time:** 16:15pm-18:35pm

**Venue:** Council Chamber, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE

**Present:** Councillors L Every (Chairman), A Hay (Vice Chairman), A Bradnam, C Richards (from 4.35pm) and Councillor A Costello (to 6.10pm)

**Apologies:** Co-opted Member: S Day

**85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were reported as recorded above

No declaration of interests were made

**86. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 30 January 2019**

The minutes of the meeting on 30 January 2019 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

**87. ACTION LOG**

The action log was reviewed. The Chairman expressed concern at the length of the action log and stated that many of the actions had been marked as ongoing for a long time. She hoped that many of the actions would be completed before the next meeting. The following verbal updates were noted:

- Minute 9 - Councillor Bradnam had requested an updated application link. Councillor Richards' application was awaited. The Chairman asked that these outstanding DBS applications were followed up.
- Minute 46 –The Interim Foster Care Manager was present and a date for the planned training session on foster care would be discussed after the meeting.
- Minute 53 - The first meeting of the mental health task and finish group had been productive and work was continuing.
- Minute 55 – The Sub-Committee had asked to be kept in touch with developments relating to central government funding for post-adoption support services. An update would be provided in June.
- Minute 65 – An elected Member asked whether the venue of Sub-Committees meetings could be reviewed as it had not attracted the additional public attendance which had been hoped.

- Minute 71 –A training session for the Local Offer had been arranged for 14<sup>th</sup> June 2019.
- Minute 77 – Two additional young people had been identified as potential substitutes for the Co-opted Members. This was yet to be confirmed, but it was hoped that the two young people would observe the next meeting. The Chairman emphasised the fact that inviting young people to the meeting fitted in perfectly with the values and aims of the Sub-Committee.
- Minute 80 – Officers were consulting the Voice Matter group to take their views on the use of the word ‘recovery’ after trauma.
- Minute 83 – The Chairman asked that Members should be advised about benefits that could be accessed by care leavers as part of the training session on the Local Offer.

It was resolved to:

- a) Review the action log and note verbal updates.

## **88. PARTICIPATION REPORT**

The Sub-Committee considered an update on the work of the Participation Service. The Service Development Manager stated that the Participation Service had hosted the annual awards ceremony on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019. Two hundred children and young people had been nominated for an award and around eighty people had attended with their foster carers. A number of children and young people along with their carers had also attended a stargazing session at Cambridge University hosted by the Realise team.

It was hoped that the Participation Service would be fully staffed by the end of March. The participation worker currently on maternity leave was due to return to their post during April 2019. Once the vacancies in the team had been filled they would be better placed to engage effectively with children and young people through a wider range of participation events. The next Voices Matter meeting had been planned and would take place during the Easter Holidays and would include bowling. A number of activities were planned throughout 2019.

In discussion:

- Officers stated that they would be contacting children newly in care to inform them about the events being held.
- The Chairman welcomed the wider programme of events being offered and asked how young people accommodated outside of the county were being involved. Officers stated that participation events were open to all and that they were in discussion with colleagues in the Virtual School about ways to promote participation events to young people living outside of the county, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children. These events provided a relaxed environment where young people felt they could express their opinions.

- An elected Member asked about the mechanism for children and young people to provide feedback to the Participation Team if they did not want to attend the events. Officers stated that they were trying to be more creative and flexible in the format and location of events to make them appealing to the widest possible audience.
- The Service Development Manager confirmed that Cambridge University had agreed that the October Voices Matter meeting would take place at one of the Realise events. This event would include a session on developing debating skills.
- The Chairman suggested using an alumni system where older, more experienced children who were leaving foster care provided their knowledge to children who were currently in care. Officers commented that this process was already happening as some members of the Care Leavers Forum did attend Voices Matter.

It was resolved to:

Comment on the consultation events and activities provided by the Participation Service to Children Looked After.

## **89. VIRTUAL SCHOOL**

The Chairman stated that the Virtual School report was a standing item and reflected the Sub-Committee's continued focus on the education and achievement of Children in Care.

The Sub-Committee considered a report providing an update from the Virtual School. The Interim Deputy Head Teacher stated that the current substantive Head Teacher post would be advertised shortly with the appointee expected to start in September 2019. She outlined the four priorities presented in the report:

- i. Data Collection: Officers were working closely with the Business Intelligence Team to create a toolkit for collecting and tracking key data such as attendance, exclusions and progress. With the agreement of the Service Director for Education a data manager would be appointed within the team to help identify and track key issues;
- ii. Creating a culture of school improvement: In recent months officers had been working closely with Suffolk, Hertfordshire and Peterborough's Virtual Schools which had enabled them to learn from other counties' experiences. The Virtual School Development Plan would be rolled out in Fenland first. A conference for designated teachers would take place on 1 July 2019 to share this vision. To encourage attendance the Virtual School was offering to fund supply teacher cover for schools which signed up early for places. A record would be kept of which schools were not represented and this would be followed up and monitored. The greatest challenge was engaging with out of county schools and officers were looking into the possibility of using reciprocal arrangements for training with geographical neighbours.
- iii. Access and Inclusion Team: The Virtual School offer had been drafted.
- iv. Internal processes and procedures: A development week was taking place from 25 March to focus on internal practice within the Virtual School. Amongst the proposals being considered would be moving to a system where schools would

bid in advance for Pupil Premium Plus project spending and a greater focus on Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

In discussion:

- Members were pleased to note the appointment of an Educational Psychologist to the Virtual School for two days per week from the end of March 2019, moving to three days per week from September 2019;
- A Member commended the Interim Head and Deputy Head Teachers of the Virtual School for what they had achieved so far in a short space of time;
- In relation to the recent Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services, a Member asked how PEP targets would be set from the data obtained. The Interim Deputy Head Teacher of the Virtual School stated that the Virtual School would be moving to a submission deadline for PEPs so that it could review termly data to see how pupils were progressing in relation to their PEP targets. Targets might relate to a child's strengths or social, emotional or mental health goals as well as to academic achievements;
- A Member commented that if the process for monitoring the Pupil Premium Plus payments was overly complicated then it could become an onerous task for teachers. Officers stated that the process would be kept as simple as possible and that schools or groups of schools would be able to make a clustered bid;
- A Member asked why the Year 5/6 learning support programme had not proved more widely popular. Officers suggested that this might have been due to it requiring children to be withdrawn from some lessons or clashing with after school activities;
- A Member commented that they also sat on the Virtual School Management Board. This now met twice per term instead of once and it was very supportive of the work being done by the Interim Head Teacher and her team;
- The Assistant Director for Children's Services stated that she was encouraged to hear about the positive changes taking place in support of Children in Care. She commented that she would also be interested to hear how Pupil Premium funding might be used creatively to support students in Years 11 and 13 through their exam preparation. Officers undertook to include this information in a future report.

**(Action: Interim Head of the Virtual School)**

The Chairman stated that the Sub-Committee was pleased to hear about the positive work being undertaken by the Virtual School as it remained an area about which Members were passionate. It would be useful to receive projected outcomes for the current academic year as an initial indicator of the position compared to last year. The Sub-Committee would also like to see headline data for Early Years, Key Stage 4 and Post 16 pupils and would be guided by the Interim Head of the Virtual School on when this would be ready to be presented.

It was resolved to:

Note and comment on the report

## **90. PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Sub-Committee received a report providing an overview of the performance of services for Children in Care and Care Leavers for December 2018 and January 2019. The Service Manager for Corporate Parenting outlined to the Sub-Committee the key findings from the report. In the four month period between October 2018 and January 2019 the total number of Children in Care had stayed the same. However, looking at the most recent data the number of Children in Care was starting to rise. The percentage of children who had been visited by their social worker was also improving.

In discussion:

- The Chairman stated that the accessibility of the data was improving each time the report was presented to the Sub-Committee and thanked officers for their work on this.
- A Member queried why the placement type for four children was marked as unknown. Officers confirmed that the children's location was known, and that this was a technical error arising from the input of data;
- A Member requested clarification regarding the Coram Cambridge Adoption table. Officers stated that the drop in figures for January was due to a complex case involving the placement of several siblings. Whilst it had taken time to achieve, the permanent outcome was extremely positive;
- A Member asked about the number of care leavers not in employment, education and training (NEET). Officers stated that some young people chose not to engage which led to gaps in the data, but that officers continued to reach out to these young people. Figures for this group in Cambridgeshire were comparable with the national average and a dedicated support worker was being appointed to work with this group to try to improve this figure. It was also planned to carry out an aspirational audit in conjunction with the Virtual School;
- The Assistant Director for Children's Services stated that there had been a drop in the percentage of health assessments being completed within timescale in December 2018 due to structural changes. A meeting was taking place the following week with Health Service colleagues and it was expected that an improvement would be seen going forward. John Peberdy, Service Director for Children and Young People's Health Services at Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust hoped to attend the Sub-Committee's next meeting and would be able to provide a health provider's perspective.

It was resolved to:

Review performance for Children in Care and comment on the themes and trends identified in this report.

## **91. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT- RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND TRAINING**

The Sub-Committee considered a report detailing workforce development issues. The Head of Service Safeguarding North explained that there had been two restructures in two years. This had both provided challenges and learning experiences for the service. A new strategy and action plan had been developed as a product of the restructuring, and good feedback had been received. The recruitment team was in the process of redesigning the recruitment strategy by shortening and simplifying the recruitment process. Job vacancies were advertised using social media as a marketing tool to attract potential applicants. An apprenticeship system was being introduced and a celebration day was planned to reflect on the positive outcomes.

In discussion:

- The Chairman welcomed the creativity found in the new recruitment process, but sought an assurance that no shortcuts were being taken which could impact on the safeguarding element of the recruitment process. Officers confirmed that this was definitely not the case;
- An elected Member requested more information regarding the difference in employment rates between the north and south of the county. The Head of Service stated that they had filled 91% of all permanent vacancies in the north of the county compared to 66% in the south. This disparity might in part be explained by higher house prices in the south of the county and difficulties commuting. Initiatives to address this included the recruitment of social workers from overseas and the re-introduction of flexible working patterns
- The Assistant Director for Children's Services commented that the Cambs 2020 programme would reduce the commuting time for some officers as they would move out of Cambridge City;
- In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Director for Children's Services stated that staffing levels in Children's Services in Cambridgeshire were currently the best they had been for over three years. However, vacancies remained in crucial safeguarding roles which they were actively trying to recruit.

It was resolved:

Review and comment on the update provided

## **92. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER: EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

The Sub-Committee received a progress report on multi-agency work regarding the emotional health and wellbeing of Children in Care. The Professional Lead for Psychology stated that a diverse and effective multi-agency group had been established which had set clear goals to understand what the current offer from universal and specialist services were for children. The results would be used as a benchmark for care services in Cambridgeshire and to develop a clear action plan.

Arising from the report, Members:

- Requested more information regarding the functionality of the multi-agency group. The Professional Lead for Psychology clarified that it was a Multi-Agency task and finish group. She confirmed that the group was taking a child orientated approach;
- Welcomed the positive engagement from partners;
- The Vice Chairman commented that the Sub-Committee would welcome an update in six months' time describing the results of the work at that point. This might usefully be linked with a further workshop or training session, ideally on a date suitable for Councillor Richards;  
(**Action: Professional Lead for Psychology**)

The Chairman stated that the Sub-Committee would want to be kept closely in touch with this work through update reports when appropriate. She also suggested this work should be included as part of a future Corporate Parenting item at a Members' Seminar.  
(**Action: Professional Lead for Psychology**)

It was resolved to:

Review the progress to date on multi-agency work regarding the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people looked after.

### **93. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE COUNCIL IN RESPONSE TO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND COUNTY LINES GANG EXPLOITATION**

The Sub-Committee received a report outlining the work being undertaken to address the exploitation of children and young people in Cambridgeshire. This responded to a request by the Children and Young People Committee follow this issue up. The Head of Service Safeguarding, North Hub stated that officers were clear about their statutory duties and that strong partnership working existed with schools, health service colleagues, the police and the voluntary sectors. There was an increasing focus on contextual safeguarding which looked at the situation around a child as well as the children themselves.

During discussion:

- An elected Member commented that South Cambridgeshire District Council was taking forward work with private hire taxi firms in support of safeguarding issues. The Chairman stated that this was something which Sub-Committee members could usefully follow up with their own District and City Councils;
- The Chairman noted that an unsuccessful bid had been submitted to the Innovate and Cultivate Fund regarding tackling county lines and welcomed news that work was in hand on formulating a new bid.
- The Chairman stated that there might be scope for using some Community Safety funding in support of this work and asked that this should be explored. The

Assistant Director for Children's Services suggested that Dave Sargeant, an ex-police officer working with the Local Safeguarding Children Board, would be a good person to help co-ordinate thinking on this and suggested that he be invited to deliver a training session. This might also be opened to members of the Children and Young People Committee.

**(Action: Head of Service: Integrated Front Door)**

It was resolved to:

Note and comment on the report.

#### **94. SUB-COMMITTEE WORKSHOP AND TRAINING PLAN**

The Sub-Committee reviewed its workshop and training plan. It was suggested that the training session on the access to Universal Credit and benefits for care leavers could fit into the Corporate Parenting Care Leaver Local Offer seminar.

It was resolved to:

Note and comment on the Sub-Committee's workshop and training plan

#### **95. AGENDA PLAN**

The agenda plan was reviewed and it was agreed that the Workforce Development report would be taken off the Forward Agenda Plan for May unless there were any headline figures to report.

Members emphasised the importance of the Sub-Committee having access to the first draft of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report to allow for their input before it was presented to the Children and Young People Committee in September 2019.

The Chairman stated that she would be having bi-monthly meetings with the Chairman of the Children and Young People Committee and the Executive Director for People and Communities to discuss the strategic and operational roles of the respective Committees and to align their work programmes and agendas. This would include considering the Action Plan and response to the findings of the recent Ofsted Inspection of Cambridgeshire's Children's Services. She would update the Sub-Committee on this at the next meeting.

It was resolved to:

Note and comment on the Sub-Committee's agenda plan

Chairman  
(Date)