

## **CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Wednesday 15 January 2020

**Time:** 4.00pm-5.55pm

**Venue:** Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge

**Present:** Councillors L Every (Chairman), A Hay (Vice Chairman), A Costello, E Meschini and A Taylor

**Apologies:** Councillor A Bradnam (substituted by Councillor A Taylor)

Co-opted member: S Day

### **MEETING THEME: HEALTH**

#### **132: CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman stated that she had recently spent a half day with the staff team at Noble House, learning more about their work first hand. She thanked officers for facilitating this. She welcomed two new officers to the Corporate Parenting team: Joe Gilbert, a specialist personal advisor who would be developing the support network available to young people leaving care as part of the Local Officer through links with business and mentoring schemes; and Tony Darnell, who would be leading on marketing and communications for the fostering and adoption services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, to continue the drive to attract more in house foster carers and adoptive parents. Their work would further enhance the support and opportunities available to the Council's children in care and care leavers and reflected the importance which both Members and senior officers attached to this.

The Sub-Committee usually received a Performance Report as a standing item at each meeting, but the Chairman had agreed that it was not required this time as the Sub-Committee would instead be reviewing the draft annual report for 2018-19.

#### **133. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were reported as recorded above. There were no declarations of interest.

#### **134. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 20 NOVEMBER 2019**

The minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate record by those present, subject to noting that Mr Dave Sergeant was a former police officer (minute 125 refers).

### 135. ACTION LOG

A revised action log had been circulated in advance of the meeting and published on the Council's website showing updates received since the agenda was published. This was reviewed and the following verbal updates reported:

- Minute 93: Actions taken by the Council in response to Child Sexual Exploitation and County Lines Gang Exploitation/ Minute 113: Sub-Committee workshop and training plan: Dates for training would be set after the meeting closed.
- Minute 132: Workforce Development: The Chairman had contacted City College Peterborough to request that details of the free training provided by its health and care academy be shared with officers.

It was resolved:

To review the action log and note verbal updates.

### 136. PARTICIPATION REPORT

Christmas participation events including a create and make session, pantomime visit and Christmas lunch had received positive feedback from attendees, although numbers attending had been low. Work on the programme of events for 2020 was progressing well and included a busy schedule of events planned for the February half-term. The Sub-Committee's remaining co-opted member had given notice that he would be stepping down when his appointment ended in April 2020 due to work commitments. Several young people had attended Sub-Committee meetings in recent months as observers, but none had felt able to take on the commitment of becoming a co-opted member.

Individual members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- The Chairman stated that the co-opted members helped ensure that the voice of children in care and care leavers was central to the Sub-Committee's work. As such, Members would want every effort made to identify young people able to take on this role. Officers confirmed that this was being done, but that the time commitments involved could make it difficult given young people's other work and educational commitments. A Member asked whether it would be possible for young people to engage either with Sub-Committee meetings or informal meetings via Skype. Officers undertook to explore this and report back.  
**(Action: Democratic Services Officer)**
- Welcomed the positive feedback received from those who attended the Christmas participation events. Although numbers had been small Members' judged that it was important to make these opportunities available to those who wanted them. Officers confirmed that they worked with the Local Offer team to ensure that appropriate participation events were arranged for older children and young people. The Chairman welcomed this, commenting that it was important to keep in touch with this age group to make sure that they knew that the Council remained interested and involved in their lives;

- The Chairman suggested that a discussion take place outside of the meeting about ways of involving children and young people in the Sub-Committee's work outside of participation in its public meeting.  
**(Action: Service Development Manager)**

It was resolved to:

- a) Comment and provide feedback on the range of consultation events and activities the Participation Service provide for children in care and care leavers.

### **137. CHILDREN IN CARE HEALTH ASSESSMENTS**

The Chairman stated that performance in relation to initial health assessments and health assessment reviews for children in care remained an area of particular focus for the Sub-Committee. Members wish remained that officers should work with colleagues in partner organisations to ensure that children and young people in the Council's care received the support they required in a timely way. She welcomed John Peberdy, Service Director at Cambridgeshire Community Service (CCS) NHS Trust, Dr Alison Sansome, Consultant Community Paediatrician (CCS) and Deborah Spencer, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children at Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to the meeting and invited them to introduce their report.

The Sub-Committee was advised that initial health assessments (IHAs) were carried out by a paediatrician, usually in a clinic setting, whilst Review Health Assessments (RHAs) were done by a specialist nurse, often at the child's home. Significant work had been carried out during the previous year to bring together health and social care representatives to discuss areas of challenge and to work together to identify and implement solutions. This included specialist nurses offering training to safeguarding teams and the introduction of new proformas as part of the Liquid Logic system. There was a recognition by all parties that success relied on joint working. In-year performance had been adversely affected by one specialist nurse leaving the service and by a period of sickness in the paediatrician team. A new specialist nurse had been appointed and the paediatric team was working at full strength and performance had improved. The main area of challenge related to achieving the 20 day target for health assessments for children accommodated outside of Cambridgeshire. The Sub-Committee had asked whether the performance of any of the local authorities accommodating Cambridgeshire children was particularly poor. This had been investigated in relation to the 47 local authorities who had accommodated Cambridgeshire children during the past year and no authorities were identified as having a notably worse performance. However, it was acknowledged that some Authorities were known to prioritise HAs for their own children in care. A report by the Children's Commission on children in care placed out of county had been published the previous week and demonstrated that this issue was on the national agenda as well as being an area of local concern. Occasional incidents occurred of areas refusing to carry out a health assessment due to lack of capacity and these cases were raised by senior officers with their counterparts in the host authority. Legal advice had been obtained in relation to health assessment consent forms which stated that consent obtained for the IHA was enduring and that it was not necessary to seek further consent for subsequent RHAs, making the process quicker. There was insufficient capacity to send Cambridgeshire health professionals significant distances out of county to conduct HAs

for its children, but potentially this was something which could be considered on a national basis for children accommodated outside of their home county.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Timescales for conducting HAs for children placed in Cambridgeshire by other local authorities. Mr Peberdy stated that CCS did not prioritise HAs for Cambridgeshire children above those for children placed in the county by other Authorities. They were, however, reliant on the requesting Authority providing the correct request and consent forms to enable their request to be actioned. Some neighbouring Authorities might choose to visit their own children to carry out HAs and the CCS also did this for some Cambridgeshire children accommodated just outside of the county boundaries;
- Performance for HAs carried out on children accommodated within Cambridgeshire. Although improving, these were not yet as good as had been expected. Mr Peberdy commented that this reflected the staffing issues described above. A service re-organisation earlier in the year had also impacted on timescales, but the new arrangements had now bedded in. Refusals to give consent by birth families and failures to attend appointments had also led to delays and CCS would welcome a steer on dealing with this. The Assistant Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that the Council would support a more robust approach around timeframes. It was a statutory requirement that they should be carried out within 20 days and officers would work in partnership with CCS to ensure that birth families and foster carers were fully aware of the importance of HAs;
- Asked whether priority was given to carrying out IHAs on children and young people who were subject to emergency moves and whether these assessments looked at their mental as well as physical health. The Consultant Community Paediatrician stated that these children could be placed out of county, in which case the timeliness of the IHA was dependent on the host authority. IHAs followed an holistic approach and so looked at both physical and mental health. The Assistant Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that those children subject to an emergency placement would be visited by a social worker on the day they were placed and visited again within a few days to see how they were settling.
- Expressed surprise that social care might not be aware of children placed in Cambridgeshire by other local authorities and that there was no national database recording where all children in care were placed. Officers stated that social care teams advised each other of out of county placements and that in Cambridgeshire this information would be shared with colleagues at CCS. However, this was reliant on the authority placing the child advising the Cambridgeshire social care team. Discussions around the possible creation of a central database was the subject of discussion amongst Directors of Children's Social Care at a national level.
- The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children at the CCG stated that she had recently carried out an audit of health assessments in Cambridgeshire and the quality was exceptional.
- The Chairman invited John Priest, Chair of Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association, to share his experience of health assessments. Mr Priest commented that his experience of health assessments was generally good. Minor issues had

arisen in relation to appointments and he suggested that this might be addressed by social workers reminding foster carers at placement stage that a health assessment appointment would be arriving within the next 20 days.

- The Assistant Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that Members had rightly seized on the importance of timely, high quality IHAs and RHAs and of partnership working between the Council, CCS, CCG and foster carers to achieve this. This would be a standing agenda item at the newly established bi-monthly Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and would be a key performance indicator. The Chairman asked that a note be circulated setting out the roles and functions of both the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and the new Fostering Board and their relationship to the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee for reference. It would also be helpful for Sub-Committee members to receive copies of any communications issued by the Corporate Parenting Service so that they could brief their Groups.

**(Action: Head of the Corporate Parenting Service)**

Summing up, the Chairman thanked colleagues from CCS and the CCG for coming back to the Sub-Committee to report on the current position on this important area. Challenges clearly remained, but improvements had been seen and the direction of travel was encouraging. The Sub-Committee should be seen as part of the wider partnership approach and she asked to be advised if there was anything which could be done at county level to encourage or support progress. The Chairman invited the report authors to submit a further report in six months' time to review the position.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with the lead officers.

### **138. IMPROVING THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE**

The report was presented by the Assistant Director for Children and Safeguarding as the author, Dr Pam Parker, had recently left the Council to take up a new post. She expressed her thanks to Dr Parker for her hard work on this issue which had provided a good platform on which to build. The Chairman also expressed thanks on behalf of the Sub-Committee for Dr Parker's work and for the valuable training which she had provided to members.

The work described in the report had been initiated by the Sub-Committee and had brought together key stakeholders to look at ways of improving the emotional health and wellbeing of children in care and care leavers. The group had been given the freedom to be innovative and aspirational in their aims. Five key themes had been identified:

1. oversight of universal and specialist services;
2. the use of data to inform county-wide service developments and assess impact;
3. clarity about service pathways and accessible, reliable information for foster carers;

4. shared models of practice across services and the application of evidence-based practice;
5. children and young people's experience of services.

Officers now sought a steer from the Sub-Committee on whether members would like them to work up proposals on all of these areas or whether they would prefer to identify priority areas for further work.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- The report contained lots of acronyms. It was vital that these were properly explained in future reports for the benefit of Sub-Committee members and members of the public;  
**(Action: Assistant Director: Children and Safeguarding)**
- Expressed surprise that some professionals were not aware of the full range of services available.

Following discussion it was agreed that themes 1 and 3 (oversight of universal and special services and clarity about service pathways and accessible, reliable information for foster carers) should be examined first as these linked to all of the other areas identified. The new Corporate Parenting Partnership Board would be tasked with progressing work on these areas. Themes 2 and 4 (the use of data to inform county-wide service developments and assess impact and shared models of practice across services and the application of evidence-based practice) would be followed up by the Assistant Director for Children and Safeguarding. Some of the recommendations would be taken to the Joint Commissioning Unit to look at quicker pathways to services and support. A follow-up report would be brought to the Sub-Committee in around six months' time. However, if the Partnership Board felt that momentum was being lost in the interim the Chairman would be advised.

**(Action: Assistant Director: Children and Safeguarding)**

It was resolved:

- a) Note the report.

### **139. VIRTUAL SCHOOL – CHILDREN IN CARE UNVALIDATED END OF YEAR DATA**

The Sub-Committee reviewed the unvalidated end of year data for academic year 2018/19 for those children who had been in care for more than a year. No analysis of the data had been offered at this stage as the results remained unvalidated. A number of changes to the way the Virtual School works had been introduced in September 2019 and the impact of these should become evident in future years' data. This included streamlining the personal education plan (PEP) process, looking at how the pupil voice was captured, a greater focus around outcomes and work around attendance and exclusions. The link between outcomes and pupil premium plus payments had been strengthened. Schools were being supported with implementing the new format and this had been received positively. Training had been both delivered direct and uploaded to YouTube so that it was permanently available. Links would be sent to Sub-Committee members for information.

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

The Chairman had agreed with officers that there was no need to provide a report from the Virtual School at every meeting of the Sub-Committee. Instead, three reports would be received each year. These would be in January, to report unvalidated end of year attainment data; in July, to report on a particular project or initiative being undertaken by the Virtual School; and in the autumn term, to report validated attainment data, including at Post 16.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Expressed disappointment at the attainment levels for reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 1 which were down on 2018 results. Officers stated that this represented a small cohort of children of whom three had education, health and care plans and five had special educational needs. However, of the data currently received this did represent to weakest area of performance. Members suggested that it would be helpful in future reports to include this type of narrative as a footnote to provide context to the data.  
**(Action: Head of the Virtual School)**
- Noted that support from the Virtual School would begin as soon as a child entered care, but that the data referred only to those children who had been in care for more than a year.
- The Chairman asked whether any training would be offered to social workers and foster carers around the new arrangements to address any concerns they might have. The Head of the Virtual School acknowledged that changes in the way services were delivered could be unsettling. Historically, Virtual School staff had attended PEP meetings and could offer challenge in ways which social workers might have felt unable. Social workers were being offered training around this and Virtual School staff would still be available by phone to offer advice and guidance.
- The Chairman stated that the Adult Skills Service represented an important part of the Local Offer and included training for maths and English qualifications. The Combined Authority was also funding a provider to carry out a piece of work around pre-NEETs (not in education, employment or training). She would pass information on this to officers.  
**(Action: Chairman)**
- Noted that the July report would advise the Sub-Committee of summer activities offered to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), providing opportunities for both positive engagement and supporting the development of English language skills.

It was resolved:

- a) Note and comment on the report, offering support and challenge as necessary.

#### **140. DRAFT CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19**

The Chairman stated that the annual Corporate Parenting report to the Children and Young People Committee would take a new format this year, reporting back on the work of the Sub-Committee as well as providing factual information about the services

provided to the county's children in care and care leavers. Officers had reviewed the annual reports produced by other local authorities to identify useful elements which could be adopted in Cambridgeshire. Members had been involved in discussing the format and content of the report and were keen that the end result should be informative, accessible and engaging to a wide variety of audiences including councillors, children in care and care leavers, foster carers and the wider public. The 2018/19 report represented a transitional year from the old-style report to the new format and as such had taken longer than usual to produce. The 2019/20 report would be produced closer to the end of the reporting year to keep the data fresh.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Suggested that percentages should be included on charts so that the data was accessible when viewed in black and white text. The use of acronyms should be avoided where possible and those that were used should be clearly explained.  
**(Action: Head of Corporate Parenting)**
- Asked for more information about the decision to take adoption services back in-house. Officers stated that it was decided to bring the service back in-house when the existing partnership agreement with Coram Cambridgeshire ended. There had been no change to the composition of adoption panels and the change had strengthened links with colleagues in the adoption service.
- Asked whether consideration had been given to running Siblings Forever events more often, given how greatly they were valued by the children taking part. Officers stated that other avenues also existed to help maintain contact between siblings placed with different foster carers, including the invaluable work done by foster carers themselves and by the Participation Service. Siblings Forever events were primarily delivered by staff volunteers so there would be time and cost implications to increasing the number of events offered. Officers undertook to reflect further on this and report back.  
**(Action: Head of Corporate Parenting)**

It was resolved:

- a) review and agree the draft Annual Report 2018-19, subject to the amendments discussed at the meeting, for submission to the Children and Young People Committee.

## 141. AGENDA PLAN

The Sub-Committee reviewed the agenda plan. The Chairman asked that a briefing note on the Local Offer should be circulated to the Sub-Committee to update members on developments.

**(Action: Specialist Personal Adviser)**

The Chairman asked that the six month update report on the refreshed strategy for reducing the number of children in care and care leavers who were not in education, employment and training (NEET) should include details of what work was being done with funding providers to support English and maths skills Post 16.

**(Action: Countywide NEET Manager)**

It was resolved to:

- a) Review and note the agenda plan.

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

Members reviewed the Sub-Committee workshop and training plan. Members would be sent diary invitations for the next round of training sessions.

**(Action: Head of Corporate Parenting Service)**

It was resolved to:

- a) Review and note the Sub-Committee Workshop and Training Plan.

Chairman  
(date)