

Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee: Minutes

Date: Wednesday 23 March 2022

Time: 4.00pm – 5:40 pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors B Goodliffe, A Hay, M King, P Slatter (Vice-Chair)

Non-voting observer:

K Arrowsmith – Chair, Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association

Meeting theme: Health

27. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Bradnam, substituted by Councillor M King; Councillor A Bulat, substituted by Councillor B Goodliffe; and Councillor M McGuire.

Councillor Slatter chaired the meeting in Councillor Bradnam's absence.

28. Minutes – 17 November 2021 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting on 17 November 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair. The action log was discussed.

29. Petitions and Public Questions

There were no petitions or public questions.

30. Participation Report

The Committee received a report on the work of the Participation Team. Activities organised included: virtual and in-person half term activities; a music and performance skills project in collaboration with care leavers; production of an ideal worker video; and a 'Coming into Care' pack relaunch.

In response to the report, Sub-Committee members:

- Described the re-launch of welcome packs for children entering care which would be used alongside the 'worry packs' produced by the Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association. Any feedback on the welcome pack from foster carers would be welcome.

- Requested sight of greeting cards produced by the Children in Care Council for care workers. **Action.**
- Asked for confirmation of whether a virtual exhibition of children in care's artwork was planned this year. If so, Sub-Committee members would like to discuss inviting Members of COSMIC Committee to get involved. **Action**

It was resolved to:

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

31. Report from Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association

The Committee received a report on the issues raised in the February informal CFCA meeting and the service's response to this. Responsive actions included:

- Lateral flow test [LFT] costs: Agreement was being sought for foster carers to be included on the list of essential workers requiring LFTs.
- Training: Training, formerly known as 'Skills to Foster', had been updated following feedback from foster carers and was now titled 'Journey to Foster'.
- Promotion of the Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association: The CFCA was keen to raise the Association's profile and to encourage more foster carers to become affiliated. It was publicised in the foster care newsletter, foster care website, initial foster carer supervisory sessions, new carer events, and through CFCA and Peterborough Committee representation in foster carer training sessions. The Council could not share foster carers' contact details with the CFCA. The Chair of the Foster Carers' Association noted that the CFCA now had around 110 members and ten Committee members.
- Improving dental appointment availability: A letter had been sent to NHS England by the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. The service was also in discussion with health leads on this issue.
- Passport application processing delays: The process was under review and the intention was that foster carers would be able to lead on this in future. Guidance was being developed.
- Home to School Transport: Discussions were taking place with the Transport Team and further information would be included in the foster carers' newsletter.

The Chair of the Foster Carers' Association:

- Expressed thanks for the recent uplift given to foster carers, but expressed the CFCA's concern regarding the time being taken to complete the Additional

Allowance Consultation which had begun in 2019. The Chair hoped issue would have been resolved by the time the Sub-Committee met.

- Commented that some other foster carers' association were given local authority email addresses. Officers confirmed that the service communicates with foster carers via their own email addresses and will continue to do so. The Council was considering an IT process whereby foster carers can update a child's electronic record directly with key information, however this was not yet available.
- Emphasised that recruitment may improve should the Local Authority offer training recognised outside the organisation.

In response to the report, Committee members:

- Clarified that private fostering was foster care provided by a relative or friend at the parents' request.
- Noted that foster care was described as a career as this recognised the professionalism of the foster service and the upskilling opportunities within the vocation.
- The Assistant Director for Children's Services offered a note about the USPs and benefits of fostering for Cambridgeshire in comparison to an independent fostering agency. Action.
- Suggested foster carers could automatically be joined the CFCA through an opt-out policy. Officers stated that this would breach data protection and would reduce the freedom of choice for foster carers to join the CFCA and/or other support groups, however other options were being explored.

It was resolved to:

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

32. Health Report February 2022

The Committee received a report on the health and health outcomes of children in care April-December 2021. Updates included: Children in Care Partnership meetings; an audit of initial health assessments and review health assessments, ending March 2022; expansion of persons to whom the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire was offered; bloodborne virus and tuberculosis screening in addition to initial health assessments for unaccompanied asylum seekers; the end of additional funding for dental services for looked after children in March 2022.

In response to the report, Sub-Committee members raised the following issues:

- Dentistry: Noted that consideration was being given including a mini mouth check within the initial health assessment. If concerns were flagged, social workers would pursue this. Members welcomed the scheme being run at St Mary's, Ely and would like to see other dental surgeries encouraged to make a similar offer.
- Initial health assessments: Noted that these were completed by general paediatricians and did not include a mental health assessment, but that they could make a referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services if they felt this was appropriate.
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: Established that the designated nurse was reviewing receipt of the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire and signposting. Peterborough used a referral hub and the Designated Nurse was asked to provide details of the Cambridgeshire equivalent. **Action.**

The Chair of the CFCA commented that foster carers may engage more should they receive feedback on the use and value of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

- Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers: Noted that all unaccompanied asylum seeking children's bloodborne virus screening and initial health checks were completed in Peterborough. This had caused a backlog and acute paediatricians had offered assistance to reduce this, but had been advised that this was not required.
- Noted that page 26 of the report should read, 'Bloodborne virus audit to continue until March 2022' and not to March 2021 as stated.
- The Chair of the CFCA asked that the health audit should be considered by the Sub-Committee once it was completed and that this should not wait until the next health-themed meeting.

It was resolved to:

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

33. Corporate Parenting Performance Report December 2021

The Committee received a report on the performance of the Corporate Parenting Service. In presenting the report, the officer highlighted the increase in placement stability; that the rate of children in care with a personal education plan [PEP] was 98.4%; and the equalising of number of in-house foster placements in comparison to placements with external providers.

In response to the report, Sub-Committee members:

- Noted that the County's statistical neighbours had a similar ratio of in- house and private foster placements.

- Asked whether there was a plan in place regarding statutory visits and the timeliness of these. Officers stated that Covid was impacting on visits.
- Celebrated the high adoption rates in Cambridgeshire.
- The Chair of the CFCA highlighted the positive impact of Virtual School Board audits.
- Asked for a note on the percentage of children in care attending schools rated as either good or outstanding by Ofsted, and the percentage of all children in good or outstanding schools for the county as a whole. **Action**
- Requested the letter sent to National Health Service England was circulated to Committee members. **Action.**
- Requested removal of the phrase 'breakdown' in page 1 of the report for greater clarity. **Action.**

It was resolved to:

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

34. Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan

Members suggested opening up the planned training sessions on supporting the mental and emotional health needs of children in care/ on the edge of care, and Journeys for Children in Care and Care Leavers to all Members. The proposed session on children in care returning to live with their birth families should be opened to members of the Children and Young People Committee as well as the Sub-Committee. **Action.**

Any further sessions would be scheduled after May 2022 to avoid the pre-election period. The Vice-Chair suggested that the training taking place 4 May 2022 could be repeated for Councillors unable to attend training as a result of this. **Action.**

It was resolved to note and comment on the Sub-Committee workshop and training plan.

35. Sub-Committee Agenda Plan

The following items were added to the agenda plan for the informal meeting 18 May 2022:

- Supervised contact service
- Audit report on blood borne viruses in UASC

It was resolved to note and comment on the Sub-Committee agenda plan.

Chair