

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 21 November 2018

Time: 4.15-6.25pm

Venue: Meeting Room 2, Huntingdon Library, Princes Street, Huntingdon PE29 3PA

Present: Councillors L Every (Chairman), A Hay (Vice Chairman), A Bradnam and A Costello (to 6.20pm)

Co-opted Member: S Day

Apologies: Councillor C Richards

Co-opted Member: P Asker

61. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that she had been privileged to attend the Foster Carers' Long Service Awards the previous week. It had been a tremendous event and she offered her warmest thanks to all concerned.

There were two items on the agenda for the meeting which were specifically requesting councillors' help (Item 5: Virtual School and Item 9: Local Offer for Care Leavers). The Chairman welcomed this as being indicative of the Sub-Committee's evolving role and stated that councillors welcomed this guidance on how they could enhance the Council's work in support of its Looked After Children and their carers.

62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were reported as recorded above.

63. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2018

The minutes of the meeting on 19 September 2018 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

64. ACTION LOG

The action log was reviewed and the following updates noted:

- i. Minute 53: A Task and Finish Group had been established which included the Assistant Director for Children's Services, the Clinical Lead on Psychology, the Sub-Committee's two co-opted members and representatives from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation NHS Foundation Trust.
- ii. Minute 57: An update report on service re-structure would be brought to a future meeting.

65. PARTICIPATION REPORT

The Service Development Manager reported that three events were planned for children and young people of varying ages in the run up to Christmas. An information pack had been produced for children and young people entering care alongside a set of 'Promises' setting out what the Council was committed to doing for its Looked After Children. Both Participation Workers had moved to new posts and one post was currently being advertised.

In discussion:

- The Chairman stated that she would be running a stall at the Christmas event on 21 November 2018 and encouraged other members of the Sub-Committee to attend if they were able;
- The Chairman stated that the Sub-Committee was concerned about the provision for those children and young people accommodated outside of the county. They would like to see details of the programme of participation events and outreach support which was being offered;
(**Action:** Service Development Managers)
- The Co-opted member commented that it was good that options were offered to those children and young people accommodated out of county and that transport to these was provided;
- The Vice Chairman commented that, whilst valuable, the report did not meet its stated purpose of providing an update on the participation of young people with the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. Members would like this to be the focus of the next report, including the views of the two co-opted members if they were comfortable providing these;
- It was noted that holding meetings in Ely would make it easier for co-opted members to attend. This should be pursued where possible:
(**Action:** Democratic Services Officer)

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the report.

66. VIRTUAL SCHOOL

The Head of the Virtual School stated that this was the fourth year that the Virtual School had been involved in supporting Early Years children. There were currently 65 Early Years children on roll and the majority were accommodated in county, but there was a high level of churn within this cohort. A simplified Personal Education Plan (PEP) had been designed for his group. Pupil Premium payment was made at the lower rate of £300 per year for Early Years children.

Arising from the report:

- The Chairman asked what proportion of these Early Years children were likely to be adopted. Officers stated that around 70% of adoptees were aged between 1-4

years. From September, statistics would be produced for previously Looked After children;

- A Member welcomed the networking sessions being offered and asked about uptake. Officers stated that these were mainly being offered in the evening as many Early Years settings did not have the capacity to accommodate staff training during the day;
- Paragraph 2.2.4: The Chairman asked that the joint improvement strategies drawn up at the meeting for Eastern Region Early Years specialist staff should be shared with the Sub-Committee;
(**Action:** Head of the Virtual School)
- A Co-opted member asked whether the Pupil Premium payment of £2.3k ended at the age of 16. Officers confirmed that this was the case. A bursary was payable for young people aged over 16 who remained in education and settings applied direct to Government for this;
- The Chairman commented that a recent report on admissions to the Children and Young People Committee had highlighted the robust challenge being made by officers to those schools who appeared reluctant to admit Looked After Children or those with Education, Health and Care Plans. The Head of the Virtual School confirmed that she worked closely with the School Admissions Team on this. There had been six or seven cases of this type in the last six months and in one case where the school had made representations the Secretary of State for Education had found in favour of the Council and the child was now on roll at that school.

The Chairman stated that the Service Director for Education was now meeting regularly with academy chief executives and suggested that he might discuss with the Chairman of the Children and Young People Committee whether this issue might usefully be raised in that forum;

(**Action:** Service Director for Education)

- The Chairman stated that a young person at the Voices Matter Panel had commented that a request to fund a school trip from their Pupil Premium payment had been rejected. She asked who made these decisions and how they were reached. The Head of the Virtual School stated that this decision would rest with her and she would consider the educational value of the trip proposed. The Assistant Director for Children's Services acknowledged that educational value was an important consideration, but judged that as corporate parents the Council would also want to look more broadly at the social value which such trips might offer. The Chairman stated that it was important that dialogue on this should take place between the Virtual School and Children's Services;
(**Action:** Head of the Virtual School)
- Officers stated that the largest number of Looked After Children currently on roll at a single school was 20 which represented around 1% of the schools' total pupil population. Of those 20 children some were in the care of Authorities other than Cambridgeshire and so were supported by their home Authority's Virtual School;
- The Chairman stated that elected members of the Sub-Committee needed to get to know the schools in their areas to see how arrangements for Looked After Children were working in practice;

- Paragraph 4.2: It was noted that following a review of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Virtual Schools the Service Director for Education had taken the view that unification of the two Schools was not the correct route at the current time, although they would work collaboratively where possible. The Vice Chairman asked for a note on this;
(**Action:** Service Director for Education)

The Chairman noted that this would be Jo Pallett's final meeting as Head of the Virtual School before she retired. She offered her thanks on behalf of the Sub-Committee for her work and wished her well for her retirement.

It was resolved to:

- a) support the work of the Virtual School by taking issues discussed and areas for further development to Senior Local Authority Colleagues, Head Teachers and Councillors.

67. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Corporate Parenting stated that as of 31 August 2018 there were 737 Looked After Children supported by the Council. Of these 58% were male and 42% were female. At that time 364 Looked After Children were accommodated within the county with 307 living out of county, excluding unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). The number of social worker visits within timescale according to care plan had improved to 92.7%. There had also been a marginal improvement in the number of health care assessments being conducted within the required timescales, although some issues remained around the health check consent process and prioritisation of children living out of county. Work was in hand to explore this as a priority. The number of instances of Looked After Children going missing in this period was 20 and each case continued to be reviewed and assessed at the most senior levels. There were 10 young people remaining within placements under post-16 under Staying Put arrangements and three children had been adopted.

In discussion of the report:

- The Vice Chairman noted that the Council was supporting 85 UASC at that point asked whether this was consistent with the agreed level. Officers stated that this figure was in excess of the reduced quota negotiated by the Service Director for Children's Services with his Eastern Region counterparts. As such, officers were seeking to relocate a number of more recent arrivals to other local authorities within the region, where this was appropriate for the young person;
- A Member asked for the reasons behind the drop in the number of initial health assessments being conducted within 20 days during this period. Officers stated that this was mainly due to an increase in the number of UASC arriving in this period, most of whom were accommodated outside of Cambridgeshire. Summer was also historically a period of pressure.

Summing up, the Chairman stated that the Sub-Committee did not wish to duplicate work being done by the Children and Young People Committee, although there would be occasions when the same information would need to be seen by both Committees in support of their complimentary responsibilities.

It was resolved to:

- a) review performance for Looked after Children, and comment on the themes and trends identified in this report.

68. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Clinical Lead for Psychology stated that the report was based on the findings of an expert working group convened in 2017 to examine how the emotional and mental health needs of Looked After Children and care leavers could best be met. The Working Group had produced a clear and credible report and officers recommended that this should be used as a benchmark for local services. It was proposed to convene a Task and Finish Group comprising young people, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT), the Lead for Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Schools and officers to review the position in Cambridgeshire to identify and share good practice and identify where gaps in provision existed and how these might be closed.

The Chairman welcomed the report, stating that mental health services for Looked After Children was an area of major concern both to the Sub-Committee and to the county's Looked After Children.

In discussion of the report:

- A Co-opted member asked how a Looked After Child living outside of Cambridgeshire would contact someone for help. Officers stated that this needed to be done in the way which the young person was most comfortable with, but was most likely to be in the first instance via their social worker, foster carer or school. Their sense was that this was an area which required further work, particularly in relation to young people living outside of the county. Officers stated that they clearly understood that waiting for emotional and mental health services was a big issue for young people;
- The Vice Chairman stated that the meeting had been preceded by a training session on the Mind of my Own (MOMO) app for Sub-Committee members. She asked whether this app could be used by young people as another way of asking for help. Officers stated that this was something that they would be happy to look at, provided that it was able to respond quickly enough;
- The Chairman asked about the timescale for the Task and Finish Group's work and whether elected Member involvement would be beneficial at this stage. Officers stated that it was intended that the Task and Finish Group would meet bi-monthly over the next year. It was anticipated that it would identify some 'quick win' service improvements which could be implemented directly by the Council as well as other longer-term changes which would require collaborative work with partner organisations. Their initial sense was that this was not just a resource issue. The Assistant Director for Children's Services stated that officers would welcome elected Members' involvement.

The Chairman stated children and young people's emotional and mental health was also an area of interest to the Children and Young People Committee (CYP) and Health Committee. The Chairman of the CYP Committee was a member of the

Local Safeguarding Children Board and had raised the issue in that forum which had opened up conversations with other partner organisations represented on that Board.

- A Member commented that the Working Group's recommendations were not a direct correlation to its findings and that they would have liked to have seen that. Officers stated that it was intended through the Task and Finish Group to replace that personal flavour to the recommendations.

The Chairman stated that the Sub-Committee attached great importance to this work and wanted to remain closely involved with it. The offer of an update report in March 2019 was most welcome.

(**Action:** Democratic Services Officer)

It was resolved to:

- a) review the information provided and agree to use this as a benchmark for local services.

69. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

The Consultant Lead Manager: Fostering stated that the annual report before the Sub-Committee covered the period April 2017- March 2018. During that period 24 households had been approved as foster carers, including four who had transferred to the Council from independent foster care agencies. 14 households had resigned during the same period giving a net gain of 10 households. A churn of around 10% per year was expected making this figure broadly comparable. 67 Special Guardianship Orders had been made which was an increase on the previous year. 15 link carers had provided 1092 days and nights of accommodation and the Fostering Panel had held 30 meetings.

Foster carer recruitment activity was continuing, but with a greater focus on the use of social media rather than physical events. A three year programme of advertising was being supported through Transformation Funding with the first year starting on 1 September 2018. 285 enquiries had been received to date in the current year compared to a total of 365 across the whole of the previous year. The target was to convert 10% of enquiries into successful applications.

In discussion of the report:

- Officers confirmed that exit interviews were offered to all fostering households leaving the Council's service;
- The Chairman stated that the 'Staying Put' initiative was crucial to many young people and asked whether there was a programme to encourage this. Officers stated that this was one of a number of factors which was considered when approving new fostering households;
- Officers stated that there had been four complaints and allegations regarding foster carers had been received in the period. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) had been involved in each case;

- The Fostering Service was one of the highest users so far of the Mind of my Own (MOMO) app and it was hoped to continue to build on this;
- A Co-opted member asked whether the process in place for welcoming children and young people into foster care was the same for emergency placements as for those going direct to an in-house fostering household. Officers confirmed that this was the case. The Assistant Director for Children's Services stated that the experience of those entering a household as a newly Looked After Child could be variable. In the past young people had attended foster care training sessions to share their experiences which had proved a very powerful tool.

The Chairman stated that the Sub-Committee wanted foster carers to be made aware of how greatly Sub-Committee members valued their work and that they recognised both the rewards and the challenges which their work could bring. She welcomed the establishment of the Foster Carers' Association which was run by and for foster carers themselves and stated that they would be most welcome to attend the Sub-Committee's meetings if they wished. She would also be very pleased to attend a meeting of the Foster Carers' Association if they wished to invite her or to meet informally with the Association's representatives if that was preferred.

(Action: Consultant Lead Manager: Fostering)

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the Fostering Service Annual Report 2017/18.

70. LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

The Lead Corporate Parenting Manager and Graduate Management Trainee stated that under the terms of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 the Local Offer had been extended to young people up to the age of 25. This meant around an additional 350 young people eligible to receive support. Gaining buy-in from partners and stakeholders would be important to make the new arrangements sustainable. An additional six new Personal Advisers were now in place bringing the total to 18. The current web platform was now quite old and the possibility of migrating to the Council's corporate website was being explored in order to provide better functionality. The full launch was planned for January/ February 2019 following review of the proposed offer by Mark Riddell, National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers. Some representation from the Sub-Committee at this event from elected and co-opted members would be most welcome. The Local Offer was currently contained in a 50 page document, but this was still being refined. The Chairman asked that the Co-opted members of the Sub-Committee should be invited to be involved in this process.

(Action: Lead Corporate Parenting Manager)

The Chairman stated that all members of the Sub-Committee had been keenly awaiting this report and were committed to working together to support it. She noted that paragraph 2.2 set out five areas for focus – health and wellbeing; relationships; employment, education and training; accommodation; and participation in society – and suggested that consideration might be given to each of the Sub-Committee's five elected Members taking the lead on one of these areas. Graham Daniels, Director of Football at Cambridge United Football Club, was very supportive of this work and she suggested officers might contact him in relation to the launch event when more was known about the likely timing. The Sub-Committee aspired to every young person having their own business mentor Post-16.

Arising from the report:

- The Chairman asked whether the Council was working with Peterborough in shaping the offer. Officers stated that they were keen to involve Peterborough and that some preliminary discussions had taken place;
- A Co-opted member commented that their pack on the Local Offer had arrived the previous week. Much of the personal information in it was incorrect and there was no offer of support or sign-posting of how to find more information. The Assistant Director for Children's Services stated that this was very disappointing to hear and gave a commitment that it would be followed up outside of the meeting and resolved. There would also be an audit of the process carried out which would be reported to the Sub-Committee. It was imperative that young people were provided with the right information and the support needed enable them to make informed decisions about their future;
(**Action:** Assistant Director for Children's Services)
- The Chairman stated the importance of encouraging businesses to look beyond a young person's CV to see the real value which they could offer. The best advocates for this were the young people themselves, so bringing them into direct contact with business representatives was crucial. The need for this to be managed sensitively was acknowledged;
- The Local Offer team would link up outside of the meeting with the Participation Team with a view to drawing on their existing links with the University of Cambridge Admissions Office.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the development of Cambridgeshire's Local Offer to Care Leavers and support awareness of the offer within the Council.
- b) consider how Elected Members might wish to be involved and/or champion the offer for Cambridgeshire's care leavers.
- c) encourage partners to engage with the development of Cambridgeshire's Local Offer to Care Leavers.

71. SUB-COMMITTEE WORKSHOP AND TRAINING PLAN

The Sub-Committee reviewed its workshop and training plan and requested that training on the Local Offer should be added.

(**Action:** Lead Corporate Parenting Manager)

A Co-opted member asked for background information on training for foster carers. The Chairman asked that this should be sent to both Co-opted members.

(**Action:** Consultant Lead Manager: Fostering)

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the Sub-Committee's workshop and training plan.

72. AGENDA PLAN

The following changes to the Agenda Plan were requested:

- i. January 2019: Young People's Participation report – to focus on feedback from the Sub-Committee's Co-opted members, if they agreed;
- ii. Child and Adolescent Mental Health issues for Cambridgeshire's Looked After Children: To be deferred to March to allow preliminary work to take place.

It was resolved to:

- b) note and comment on the Sub-Committee's agenda plan.

Chairman
(date)