

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 13 June 2018

Time: 4.15-6.15pm

Venue: Meeting Room 2, Huntingdon Library, Princes Street, Huntingdon

Present: Councillors L Every (Chairman), A Bradnam, A Costello and C Richards (from 4.30pm)

Apologies: Councillor A Hay and Councillor K Cuffley
Co-opted Members: P Asker and S Day

36. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that apologies had been received on behalf of Councillor Cuffley who had planned to attend the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Hay. Unfortunately, he had been taken ill at a Parish Council meeting the previous evening and was now in hospital. She sent best wishes to Councillor Cuffley on behalf of all present.

Both of the Sub-Committee's Co-opted Young People's representatives were absent from the meeting as they were sitting end of year exams. All present joined the Chairman in sending them good wishes.

Unfortunately, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) had again been unable to provide a report on child and adolescent mental health services relating to Looked After Children. This was particularly disappointing as it was the second time CPFT had been unable to provide this report. The Trust had requested further information about the information which Members would want to see included in a future report and the Chairman proposed that this was discussed under Item 9: Agenda Plan (minute 45 below refers).

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillor A Hay, P Asker and S Day and on behalf of Councillor K Cuffley.

38. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 25 APRIL 2018

The minutes of the meeting on 25 April 2018 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

39. ACTION LOG

The Democratic Services Officer stated that work on completing Disclosure and Barring Service applications was in hand and would be completed shortly. The planned workshop to discuss the Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh had taken place the previous afternoon and had been a very useful session. The date of the planned training session on foster care would be changed as several Members were unable to

attend on 24 July 2018. Officers stated that Members were advised to observe Threshold and Resources Panel meetings which took place outside of their local area to avoid any potential conflicts of interest.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the Action Log and verbal updates.

40. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Service Development Manager stated that due to pressure of work in the Business Intelligence Unit the report contained only one month's data. The next report would cover three months to bring the Sub-Committee fully up to date. As of 31 March 2018 the total number of Looked After Children (LAC) in the Council's care was 698 of whom 56% were male and 44% female. These figures had remained fairly consistent across the previous twelve months. There had been a slight increase in the proportion of LAC who were in placements within the county which was an encouraging development and reflected a positive direction of travel. The proportion of LAC being visited during statutory timescales between February and March 2018 had dropped from 92% to 86%. This was mainly due to the severe weather conditions during the period, although some older children might have chosen to decline a visit. Since publication of the report some additional information relating to foster care had become available which would be circulated to members for information and included in future reports.

(Action: Residential and Placements Provision Manager)

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions:

- Officers confirmed that if a Looked After Child gave birth both the mother and baby would be Looked After Children. Sometimes they might move to a different foster carer who would be best able to provide the necessary support to both mother and baby;
- The 9% of LAC with a disability was consistent with the number of children with a disability in the wider population;
- The acronym 'FFA' was a technical term used by central government and was described as 'foster placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter – FFA/concurrent planning';
- A Member commended the table setting out the different placement types being offered both in and out of county which gave a good illustration of the variety of different ways in which children and young people were accommodated and made safe;
- A Member asked whether there was a link between those children and young people who went missing and those identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation or gang involvement. Officers confirmed that there was a correlation, with the wider Looked After Children population recognised as vulnerable. Lots of preventative work was being done on this within the Council and with local communities and all young people who went missing were offered an interview on their return to talk through their situation;

- The Assistant Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that officers had more information relating to foster care provision which they were keen to report to the Sub-Committee. She would discuss with the Chairman exactly what information Members would find most useful so that this could be included in future reports;
(**Action:** Assistant Director)
- Officers confirmed that some children and young people in the care of other local authorities were placed with independent foster carers within Cambridgeshire. Where this occurred it should be reported to the Quality and Assurance team and the figure would be included in the next Performance Report. No children in the care of other local authorities were placed with in-house foster carers. All Directors of Children's Social Care would prefer to see Looked After Children in placements within their own geographical area. Officers continued to do all they could to encourage as many foster carers as possible working in Cambridgeshire to choose to work for the Council;
(**Action:** Head of Partnerships and Quality Assurance)
- The Chairman stated that she was concerned that achievement and participation levels amongst Looked After Children as a whole were reduced in comparison to their peers and asked how this was managed both for children placed within the county and beyond its borders. Officers stated that visits by social workers were a statutory requirement and so were completed in the same way regardless of whether a child was placed in Cambridgeshire or elsewhere. However, informal contact was less easy with children and young people placed outside of the county. In these cases the social worker would also look to the child's wider support network and in particular their school to maintain these informal links. Young people placed in other local authority areas would also be invited to attend participation sessions offered by their local Council as well as continuing to be invited to those run by Cambridgeshire. The Chairman stated that she would welcome further feedback on how this worked in practice.
(**Action:** Service Development Manager)

Summing up, the Chairman stated that it was great to see how the Performance Report was evolving.

It was resolved to:

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

41. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Chairman noted that both newly appointed Participation Workers were attending the meeting as observers and offered them congratulations on their appointments and a warm welcome.

The Assistant Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that a short report had been provided this time as the Service was about to embark on a consultation exercise regarding the delivery of social work services in Cambridgeshire. It was hoped that by the next meeting in September 2018 it would be possible to bring back more detail on this, including the training which would be provided to support social workers.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions:

- A Member commented that they understood that a social work equivalent of the 'Teach First' programme in education was being launched which would allow successful applicants to train on the job. Officers stated that the 'Step Up to Social Work' programme offered the opportunity to top up qualifications via placements, but confirmed that they would follow up this possible new initiative with the Principal Social Worker;
(**Action:** Assistant Director for Children and Safeguarding)
- A Member asked that future Workforce Development reports should include the number of social workers leaving and joining the service during the period covered and trends relating to these figures; the number of hours they worked; how social workers were fitting training in around their casework; and details of travel time compared to contact time to help Members get a feel for social workers' role and how they worked;
(**Action:** Assistant Director: Children and Safeguarding)

The Chairman stated that Members were mindful of the system changes taking place and the impact these had on staff, both social workers and all those involved in working to support the County's Looked After Children. She welcomed the Assistant Director's offer of a more detailed report on this in September 2018 if the necessary information was available by then.

It was resolved:

- a) note and comment on the report;
- b) say what information members would find useful regarding workforce development in the future and in what format they would like to have this information delivered.

42. VIRTUAL SCHOOL

The Committee considered a report on by the Head of the Virtual School which responded to the Sub-Committee's request for more detailed information on the Key Stage 2 (KS2) Accelerated Learning Project and the support provided by the Virtual School to Looked After Children Post 16. It also contained comparative data relating to national results at KS2 and KS2 results for Looked After Children (LAC) in Cambridgeshire and nationally. Members noted that:

- There had been a 10% drop in the number of LAC in Cambridgeshire achieving the expected level of attainment in reading, writing and maths at the end of KS2 in 2017 compared to the previous year. Officers stated that variations in the needs of particular children and cohorts meant that it was not possible to make a direct year on year comparison. The Chairman acknowledged this, but stated that Members would still like to see comparative data from previous years in future reports;
(**Action:** Head of the Virtual School)
- KS2 results for LAC in out of county schools were lower than those for LAC attending schools within Cambridgeshire. Some of these children were placed in alternative provision;

- Whilst the Key Stage 4 Attainment 8 results for LAC in 2017 in Peterborough were higher than those for Cambridgeshire their Progress 8 results in the same period had been slightly worse than those seen in Cambridgeshire. The Progress 8 results for both Authorities and for LAC nationally were all negative scores;
- Whilst LAC under-performed in comparison to their national cohort their results were slightly better than the results of those identified as a Child in Need. Officers were looking into the reasons behind this;
- Officers stated that Pupil Premium payments for Looked After Children were administered via the Virtual School and that all schools should include information on their Pupil Premium and its impact on their website. The Chairman commented that this information was not always made clear to school governors;
- Officers stated that issues of under-performance amongst vulnerable children were a national issue which went beyond Looked After Children. The Chairman commented that this was something which the Children and Young People Committee might want to explore in more detail;
(**Action:** Service Director: Education)
- Progress data relating to attainment at KS4 assumed that students would sit eight GCSE exams, but many Looked After Children sat fewer than eight exams;
- 34% of the current Year 11 cohort had experienced at least one change of school during their secondary education;
- The Chairman noted that KS4 projections were based on KS2 results which meant that lower attainment levels at KS2 could have significant long-term implications on outcomes and achievement levels;
- Officers stated that the accelerated learning project which had been trialled with Year 6 students had found that this year group already received additional support in preparation for the KS2 SATs. Based on this learning the intervention would now be targeted at Year 4 and 5 pupils who were identified as under-performing. Unfortunately not all schools were fully engaging with the project at this stage and the Director of Education was looking at this. Some carers had also chosen not to engage with the holiday-time sessions which formed part of the offer. Members commended the decision to revise the focus of the intervention to reflect this learning and optimise the support available;
- Officers stated that Post 16 Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and ePEPs had proved much more successful in their second year of operation with around 90% being completed compared to around 40% in the previous year. 100% of PEPs had been completed for those Post 16s not in education, employment or training (NEET) and many more providers were now recognising the practical benefits of PEPs. The low completion rate in the first year had been highlighted as an area of concern by the Sub-Committee and it was pleasing that the arrangements were now becoming more firmly established. Whilst the Virtual School was not responsible for students beyond the age of 18 it had supported the secondment of a Post 18 worker from social care to support transitions;

- A Member commented that they would like to see Further Education providers and employers encouraged to look at the full range of skills and attributes which Looked After Children had to offer and not solely at their exam results;
- The Assistant Director sought an assurance as a corporate parent that support would be available on results day to those Looked After Children sitting public exams. The Head of the Virtual School confirmed that all support workers and tutors would be available on results day to support both the students themselves and their foster carers;
- Members noted that an external review of the Virtual School was currently taking place and that an update on this might be available for inclusion in the report to the next meeting in September 2018;
(**Action:** Service Director for Education/ Head of the Virtual School)
- The Chairman stated that she would like to explore young people's experience of the support arrangements provided to Looked After Children by their schools and the Virtual School in more detail with the Voices Matter Panel. She would also like to learn more about Looked After Young People's experience of college and Further Education.
(**Action:** Service Development Managers)

Summing up, the Chairman thanked the Head of the Virtual School for an informative report. The format of including some comparative data in each report together with detailed information about areas of particular interest identified in advance was working well. Members would welcome a focus on Early Years and exam results at the September meeting with the proposed focus on admissions, refusals and alternative provision moving to November 2018.

It was resolved to:

- a) review and affirm those aspects of the work of the Virtual School contained in the report.

43. YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

The Service Development Manager reported a positive position in relation to young people's participation. Two young people had now been co-opted to the Sub-Committee as planned at its inception and work was in hand to identify two more young people to act as substitute members to allow the workload to be shared. The two Co-opted Members would attend the Voices Matter Panel in July 2018 and would help establish a two-way process to share information and views between the Sub-Committee and the County's Looked After Children and young people. Two new participation workers were now in post and young people, officers and Sub-Committee members would work together in the coming months to develop the future role of the Participation Service. Officers were looking at new ways of increasing the inclusion of those children accommodated both within and outside of the county including rotating meeting venues for Voices Matter meetings to make them more widely accessible and setting up a closed Facebook page to encourage discussion. The Council's Pledge to its Looked After Children and Care Leavers Charter would both be re-visited with Voices Matter. Arrangements for the annual fun day had been confirmed since the last meeting and it would take the form of a picnic in the park. In addition to the activities already arranged a number of stakeholder organisations had expressed interest in

getting involved which was very pleasing. Participants' safety was confirmed as a key priority in the event planning given the large number of families attending.

The Chairman welcomed the energy and enthusiasm which officers were bringing to the work of the Participation Service and asked them to expand on the role envisaged for the Voices Matter Panel going forward. Officers stated that they would also be looking to the members of Voices Matter to set the agenda for meetings over the next 12 months to provide focus and structure in addition to the social element. The Chairman would be invited to each meeting. The Assistant Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding stated that it would be very important for Voices Matter to give feedback on the structural changes taking place Children's Services. They had done this in relation to previous changes and their feedback and insights had been of great value.

It was resolved:

- a) note and comment on the update regarding the Participation Team and steps to involve young people within the Sub-Committee.

44. SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR CARE LEAVERS

The Service Manager for the 14 to 25 Service explained that the Service provided support to Looked After Children aged between 14-18, care leavers aged 18-25 and unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), all of whom in Cambridgeshire's care were currently aged 14 or over.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions:

- Pathway Plans were key to supporting young people in preparing for the transition to independent living, including accommodation;
- 'Staying Put' offered a really good option to young people in settled foster care placements. It differed from adoption in relation to the young person's legal status and the Local Authority retained much closer involvement with the young person Post 18. Planning for this would typically start at around the age of 14 and it offered a stable and supportive option with good outcomes. Not as many young people were taking this path currently as officers might wish and in the longer term it was hoped that this would be included as part of the initial process of matching children and foster carers. Work was also being done to make foster carers more aware of the support package which was available to them should they feel able to provide this continuing care;
- 'Staying Put' worked best for those young people who came into care early. It was harder for those who came into care later and were less well established within their foster family or for those in residential care;
- Alternative arrangements which offered long-term stability such as Special Guardianship Orders were actively explored wherever appropriate;
- A Member asked whether adoption could be a financial disincentive compared to fostering and whether this might discourage potential adopters. Officers stated that this was possible, but that they would work hard to ensure that financial considerations would not be a barrier to someone wishing to adopt. Members welcomed this assurance;

- Officers were working with the charity Break on ways to stay close to young people transitioning from residential placements to independent living. Break was working with District and City Councils to use empty housing stock to provide semi-independent supported living accommodation. Members' support in drawing this to the attention of the District and City Council colleagues would be of great value. The Chairman stated that Members would like to hear more about Break at a future meeting.
(**Action:** Democratic Services Officer/ Service Manager for the 14-25 Service)
- Officers confirmed that they actively sought to bring those Looked After Children in out of county residential accommodation back into the county wherever possible and that work started early to match young people with the accommodation needed to support their Further Education or employment aspirations;
- Supported lodgings was a new initiative where young people lived in a family home, but with greater autonomy than existed in a more traditional foster care setting;
- Officers described a positive relationship with Cambridge Housing Services which provided accommodation in Cambridge, Peterborough and Ely. The Chairman stated that she was familiar with their accommodation in Ely and had found it to be of a good standard;
- A Member asked for more detail in relation to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). Officers stated that there were currently 156 UASC in the Council's care. Of these 98 were aged 18+ and 58 were aged under 18, with the youngest being 14. Many were semi-independent as they had come into care at an older age. In recent months two UASC had been successfully reunited with family members living in the United Kingdom. Many of these young people were excellent students who were proving to be both hardworking and aspirational. Officers confirmed that they had a good relationship with Home Office officials in relation to UASC;
- A Member asked about the impact of Brexit on UASC. The Assistant Director stated that the Local Family Justice Board, which she chaired, was very aware of the issue but had no clear answers yet;
- A Member asked about the position on returning UASC to their country of origin Post 18 if their claim for asylum was rejected. Officers stated that they worked closely with both the young people concerned and with the Home Office to ensure that these cases were handled sensitively;
- Officers stated that recent changes to legislation had extended the Council's responsibilities to the children in its care from the age of 18 to 25. The Council welcomed this change and officers were working up the local authority offer which would comprise part of the wider support package alongside District and City Councils and the private sector. It was hoped that the basic offer would be completed during September/ October 2018 with a further more aspirational offer following after.

The Chairman welcomed this work which she felt might provide the route which the Sub-Committee had been seeking to raise the business community's awareness of

the particular skills and attributes which care leavers had to offer. She saw a real role for Members in promoting this with the business community and asked officers to provide advice on how they might most usefully become involved.

(**Action:** Service Manager for the 14 to 25 Service)

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the report.

45. AGENDA PLAN

The Assistant Director for Children and Safeguarding stated that she and the Executive Director for People and Communities would be meeting with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) during the next few weeks and would take that opportunity to further clarify the information which the Sub-Committee and officers would like to see included in CPFT's report on child and adolescent mental health services relating to Looked After Children. Members commented that they would like the report to include details of the particular provision which existed for Looked After Children and how they were prioritised; how urgent work or referrals were progressed; lead times for assessment and support; and access to services.

The Sub-Committee reviewed the Agenda Plan and decided:

19 September 2018

- i. Virtual School: The September report should focus on results and Early Years, plus a six month update on the information contained in the December 2017 report, including comparative data. The focus on admissions, refusals and alternative provision would move to the November 2018 meeting;
- ii. Workforce Development: To include more detail about the proposed structural changes including the training which would be provided to support social workers, if this was available by that time;
- iii. Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption Annual Report: Officers to advise on timing of this report in the light of the reports going to the Children and Young People Committee;
(**Action:** Head of Countywide and Looked After Children)

21 November 2018

- i. New item: The work of the charity 'Break'
- ii. Youth Offending Service Annual Report: To pick up any issues or actions relating to Looked After Children arising from consideration of the report by the Children and Young People Committee on 10 July 2018.
- iii. New item: Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh – Update
- iv. New item: Concurrent care

30 January 2018

- i. Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Annual Report: For agreement prior to submission to the Children and Young People Committee.

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the agenda plan.

46. WORKSHOP AND TRAINING PLAN

The Sub-Committee reviewed its Workshop and Training Plan. The Chairman thanked officers for the helpful workshop the previous day to discuss refreshing the Corporate Parenting Strategy. It was agreed to circulate a copy of the North Lanarkshire Corporate Parenting Strategy to all Sub-Committee members for information and comparison.
(**Action:** Service Development Managers)

Several Members stated that they would be unable to attend the planned training session on foster care on 24 July 2018 and asked that this should be re-arranged.
(**Action:** Service Development Managers/ Residential and Placements Provision Manager)

It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the Workshop and Training Plan.

47. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee is due to meet next on Wednesday 19 September 2018 at 4.00pm in the Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge.

Chairman
(date)