

**CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Wednesday 22 May 2019

**Time:** 4.05-5.55pm

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

**Present:** Councillors A Hay (Vice Chairman), A Bradnam, A Costello and C Richards

Co-opted member: S Day

**Apologies:** Councillor L Every (Chairman)

**96. NOTIFICATION OF CHAIRMAN/WOMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN/WOMAN**

The Clerk stated that the Children and Young People Committee had been pleased to re-appoint Councillor Lis Every as Chairman and Councillor Anne Hay as Vice Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee at its meeting on 21 May 2019.

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

Apologies had been received from the Chairman, Councillor Every. In her absence the meeting was chaired by the Vice Chairman, Councillor Hay.

**98. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 20 MARCH 2019**

The minutes of the meeting on 20 March 2019 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Vice Chairman.

**99. ACTION LOG**

The Sub-Committee reviewed the action log. The following updates were noted:

- Minute 9: Councillor Richards would be stepping down from the Sub-Committee so her DBS check was no longer required.
- Minute 53: The Task and Finish Group was meeting bi-monthly. Meeting dates would be circulated to all members of the Sub-Committee for information.  
**(Action: Clinical Lead for Psychology)**
- Minute 58: The Permanence Practice Development Manager would discuss the format and content of the proposed training with the Chairman. Dave Sergeant would be invited to take part in this session (Action Log minute 93 refers).

It was resolved to review and comment on the Action Log.

**100. PARTICIPATION REPORT**

Officers had attended the Mind of my Own (MOMO) conference the previous week and received an award for the most improved use of the MOMO app by a local authority. Several officers had also been nominated for individual awards as MOMO Champions.

The Voices Matter group would meet the following week and around 25 children and young people were expected to attend, including some currently accommodated out of county and some with additional needs. One member of the Participation Service team was on long-term sick leave and the Participation Manager was supporting the team to cover their absence. Efforts to identify more young people to act as substitutes to the Sub-Committee's co-opted members had stalled slightly. It was hoped that the current co-opted members would have the opportunity to share their experiences with potential candidates to encourage interest and take-up. Some Arts Council funding would be available through the 'Library Presents' programme to support an arts-based project for children in care and care leavers. This would be discussed at the Voices Matter meeting the following week.

Arising from the report:

- The Vice Chairman welcomed the wide age range of children and young people who had attended the Voices Matter meeting on 9 April 2019. She stated that it was disappointing that only one young person had attended the care leavers' forum, but acknowledged that there were many competing calls on young peoples' time. The Participation Service relied on social workers to promote these opportunities to care leavers and officers undertook to remind social work teams of the importance of this;  
**(Action: Service Manager – County Wide and Children in Care)**
- A Member welcomed the award and nominations which the Council had received at the recent MOMO conference, but asked whether officers were satisfied that the app represented good value for money given that only 84 accounts had been set up when the Council currently had over 700 children and young people in its care. Officers stated that there had been more personal accounts in operation, but a number had been deleted following negative press reports. In addition to the individual accounts, young people also had access to MOMO via the 363 worker accounts currently in operation. The programme was jointly funded with Peterborough City Council and officers judged that it did represent good value for money;
- Paragraph 2.3: Officers clarified that 'Top Statements – One' related to written comments made by older children and young people and that 'Top Statements – Express' related to pictorial-based comments shared by young children and those with additional needs. Members commented that it would be helpful to make this more clear in future reports.  
**(Action: Participation Service Manager)**

It was resolved review and comment on the consultation events and activities provided by the Participation Service to Children in Care.

## **101. VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEAD TEACHERS' ANNUAL REPORT**

The Virtual School Head Teacher's annual report set out the context of the Virtual School offer and was written in May when validated exam data was available. The report noted a higher proportion of Cambridgeshire's children in care were accommodated outside of the county that was seen by other Virtual Schools in the Eastern Region. Training and development was a key aspect of the Virtual School's work and 479 educators had attended Virtual School training events during the previous year. Training was also offered to foster carers, new adopters and those caring for

children and young people under Special Guardianship Orders. Figures relating to young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) were positive with 93/106 young people in Year 12 and 75/87 young people in Year 13 being in education, employment or training. The county's statistical neighbours were performing better in relation to numbers of unauthorised absences so there was some work to be done in this area. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) remained a key priority going forward with a particular focus on their quality and quality assurance. Further detailed evaluation of progress against priorities would take place over the summer and be reported back in the autumn.

Arising from the report:

- Members thanked the Interim Head Teacher of the Virtual School for a comprehensive and helpful report;
- The Chairman noted the number of teachers at the Virtual School was reducing from 7.2 full time equivalents to 6.0 from September 2019 due to reductions in budget. Officers confirmed that the service was being re-modelled in response to a budget reduction, but stated that they also believed that this was the right way forward. Members were reassured by officers' assurance that if the changes were found to impact negatively on service delivery they would produce a business case to seek additional funding;
- Officers stated that educators and partners were not charged for the training provided by the Virtual School as the upskilling of those providing support to children and young people in care was of direct benefit to the Council;
- A Member asked what was done to support young people re-sitting public exams. Officers stated that the Post 16 team was proactive in this and that Transitions Advisers' were also involved;
- A Member sought more information about fixed term exclusions. Officers stated that generally they would expect a school to discuss a potential exclusion with the Virtual School before a final decision was reached;
- The Vice Chairman noted that a new duty had been placed on the Council in relation to support for children previously in care and asked whether the funding of £39,441 provided to meet this new duty was sufficient. Officers stated that as it was a new duty it was not yet known whether this sum would fully meet the cost of providing the service required. This would be kept under review as the new arrangements bedded in;
- The Co-opted Member commented that he felt that the number of young people in Years 12 and 13 who were within education, employment or training was really good. Looking more widely at the report he asked who should be invited to attend Post 16 PEP meetings. Officers stated that the process had been undergoing revision since January 2019. Not all students wanted their PEP reviews carried out in the same way so officers were trying to be more creative about how they were delivered provided that it fully met the needs of all involved. The young person should be consulted, but the designated person should be creative about how this was achieved;

- A Member noted that there was currently no all-girl alternative educational provision available for under 11s within the county. Officers stated that a working party on social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) was underway and that the Virtual School was involved in its work;
- Officers stated that they were working with schools and key providers to ensure that all services available to Cambridgeshire children were offered to children in addition to the support provided by the Virtual School;
- A Member asked about the current position in relation to filling the Head Teacher role at the Virtual School on a permanent basis. Officers stated that they understood this was in progress, but that the post had not yet been advertised;
- A Member welcomed the inclusion of the anonymised case studies to illustrate the work of the Virtual School which they had found both informative and moving;
- The Vice Chairman commented that it would have been useful to have had some explanation of why a child had been placed out of county, but accepted officers' explanation of the need to ensure that no child could be identified from the information given.

It was resolved to note and comment on the Virtual School Teacher's Annual Report, offering support and challenge as necessary.

## **102. PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The report before the Sub-Committee contained data as of 31 March 2019 and was in a revised format designed to make the information more readily accessible. At that date there had been 768 children in care, whilst as of 22 May 2019 there were 787 children in care. The number of children and young people visited by a social worker within statutory timescales in February and March 2019 had risen following a dip during the restructuring of the service. The number of children and young people missing and deemed at risk of exploitation was now reported as a specific cohort to make this information more readily identifiable and trackable over time. The data on Initial Health Assessments was incomplete for February 2019 and as of the meeting date no data had been received for March 2019. A whole-service approach was being taken alongside Health Service colleagues to address these figures and a reduction in outstanding consents had been achieved, but the 20 day target remained a challenge and there was some roll-over at the end of each month. Officers would expect to see an improvement in the figures coming through by the summer.

The Children's Service Annual Feedback Report 2018/19 would be submitted to the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee in July 2019. In preparation, data on complaints relating to children in care had been included in the Performance Report to allow the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee's comments to inform the report going to CYP. Of these, 17 complaints had been made by children in care themselves. These related mainly to supervised contact with birth family members, changes in social worker and being moved to a different geographical area. Complaints from others included those from birth families and complaints from foster carers regarding agreed care plans and late and missed social worker visits, exclusion for Personal Education Plan and Child in Care reviews.

Arising from the report:

- The Vice Chairman stated that it would be helpful to see which complaints had been upheld and what measures had been taken to address these issues. This should be brought back to the Sub-Committee for further examination. This request should also be flagged up in the report to CYP in July;  
**(Action: Customer Care Manager)**
- The Vice Chairman asked that percentages should be included in the ethnicity table in future reports and that the shading used to represent male and female in bar graphs should be applied consistently throughout the report;  
**(Action: Permanence Practice Development Manager)**
- Officers stated that a national task force had been established to tackle the issue of county lines exploitation and that Cambridgeshire was involved in this work;
- The Assistant Director for Children's Services stated that quite a high proportion of children accommodated outside of the county lived just across the border in neighbouring counties. However, the aim remained to accommodate as many children within Cambridgeshire as possible.

It was resolved to review performance for Children in Care and comment on the themes and trends identified in the report.

### **103. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19**

The need to meet the demand for foster care placements had led to a re-structuring of the Fostering Service from six teams into four. This avoided duplication and improved communication. A new Foster Carer recruitment campaign had been launched in September 2018, financed through Transformation funding. In total, 391 enquiries from potential foster carers had been received in 2018/19 compared to 365 in 2017/18. Had the revised campaign been launched earlier it was expected that this figure would have been higher and further increases were expected in Years 2 and 3 of the campaign. From these enquiries, 24 new foster caring families had been approved. Eight fostering households had joined the Council from Independent Foster Care agencies. Nine fostering families had left during the period which was in line with usual figures. This was primarily due to changes in personal circumstances and no in-house foster carers had left to join Independent agencies in this period. The Fostering Service was continuing to work with local language schools in relation to the DBS checking of carers as the Council had a duty of care to all young people placed outside of the family for 28 days or more.

Lots of work had been achieved in preparation for an audit of processes and systems by PQA and in response to the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) carried out in January 2019. Both audits had identified areas of strength within the Fostering Service such as the assessment and annual review processes for foster carers, but they had also highlighted that some improvements were needed, for example in the way data was held to improve access. This issue should be addressed through the introduction of the new 'Liquid Logic' system. The need to ensure that secondary foster carers and kinship foster carers received the same levels of training and supervision as primary foster carers had also been highlighted and was being addressed though placing all primary and secondary foster carers onto the main foster carer support system.

Arising from the report:

- A Member asked for clarification of the duration of Transformation funding for foster carer recruitment. Officers stated that it was for a three year period. Councillor Richards asked that it should be minuted that she would like to see this additional funding carried forward beyond the three year period and that she would like to see the Sub-Committee support this. The Vice Chairman confirmed that the Sub-Committee would want officers to look at ways of supporting foster care recruitment beyond the three year period covered by Transformation funding.  
(**Action: Assistant Director for Childrens' Services**)

It was resolved to review and comment on the report.

#### **104. SUB COMMITTEE WORKSHOP/ TRAINING PLAN**

The Sub-Committee noted that a briefing on access to universal credit and benefits for care leavers would be incorporated into the Members' Seminar on 14 June 2019 alongside the planned item on the Local Offer for care leavers.

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

#### **105. AGENDA PLAN**

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

Chairman  
(date)