

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 18 September 2019

Time: 4:00pm – 5:30pm

Venue: Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Councillors L Every (Chairman), A Bradnam and E Meschini. (to 5:30pm)

Apologies: Councillors A Costello and A Hay (Vice-Chairman).

114. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

115. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 17 JULY 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17 July 2019 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

116. ACTION LOG

The action log was reviewed and the following verbal updates were noted:

- Minute 55: This had now been completed as the report was on the agenda for this meeting.
- Minute 93: Officers informed the Sub-Committee that Mr Sergeant could no longer attend the training session on the 3rd October 2019. The Chairman stated that they would keep this date in the diary. Officers suggested that this date could be used for a training session on early permanency planning instead.
- Minute 110: The Assistant Director, Children's Services stated that Officers were currently working to try and identify a young person to be the new co-opted member on the Sub-Committee. The Chairman commented that they had been expecting another young person to attend the meeting. Officers confirmed that the young person was still interested in joining, but was not available to attend this meeting.
- Minute 111: The Assistant Director, Children's Services and the Chairman confirmed that they had a discussion regarding processing health assessments for Cambridgeshire children placed in care. They stated that a report would be brought to the Sub-Committee meeting in November.
- Minute 112: There had been a letter sent to the Chairman regarding access to Education Transport for Children in Care and Care Leavers. The Assistant Director, Children's Services asked officers whether they could make sure that all actions in that letter had been completed. (**Action:** Targeted NEET Manager/Consultant Social Worker)

- Minutes 113 b: Establish process to receive the feedback on the work of these groups of which the Sub-Committee Members are appointed which relate to children in care and care leavers. Action ongoing, The Chairman stated she would speak to Democratic Services.

The Assistant Director, Children's Services informed the Sub-Committee that the Head of Service, Corporate Parenting had created a flowchart that outlined the reporting groups that sat underneath the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. She stated that it would be beneficial if this document was circulated to the Sub-Committee. (**Action:** Head of Service, Corporate Parenting)

117. YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

The Sub-Committee reviewed the events for children in care and care leaver which had taken place over the school holidays.

Arising from the report, Members:

- Queried whether some children were not attending these events as they did not want to be identified as care leavers. The Participation Worker stated that they had received good feedback on the events. However, she did comment that this feedback had been received from children who had a good fostering experience. She stated that to overcome this labelling issue, they were going to rename the events for older young people to 16+ groups.
- Asked why children who were still in care would be reluctant to take advantage of these events. The Member suggested that Officers could work with Foster Carers to help engage them. The Participation Worker stated they had over 700 children in care and not all of them would want to attend. She suggested that a number of factors affected attendance such as, transport to the events and availability. She confirmed that they were working closely with other officers to help raise awareness of these events.

The Chairman invited the Chair of the Foster Carer's Association, John Priest to speak and asked him to provide information regarding the work of the organisation. The Chair of the Foster Carer's Association informed the Sub-Committee that they were the voice for Foster Carers. They worked with officers in the fostering service to try and improve the service provided to the children they looked after. He welcomed the invitation to attend all future Sub-Committee meetings to act as a conduit between the Sub-Committee and Foster Carers. He indicated that they had a Facebook group which was used to communicate with Foster Carers in Cambridgeshire.

In Discussion:

- A Member asked the Chair of the Foster Carer's Association why some children were not taking advantage of these events. In reply he suggested that children had personal reasons why they did not want to attend, such as not liking large congregations of people. It was suggested that Facebook groups could help promote these events in order to raise participation.
- The Chairman sought more information regarding this conduit function. The Chair of the Foster Carer's Association stated that a number of Committees and Boards were

being established that would allow for closer working relations between Members, Officer and Foster Carers. The Assistant Director, Children's Services suggested that Foster Carers could help set the Sub-Committee agenda by providing a steer on the issues they wished to raise. The Chairman agreed and commented that the Sub-Committee needed to make sure that everyone's voice was heard. This would allow them to provide an effective service to ensure the welfare of the children they look after.

- The Chairman requested more information regarding the feedback received from children who had attended these events. The Partnership & Quality Assurance Audit Manager explained that the feedback was fed into Corporate Parenting services and various regional/local projects, such as 'Ten Top Tips'.
- The Chairman asked whether the Sub-Committee's co-opted members would have access to this feedback as they were the conduit between the Sub-Committee and young people. In reply the Participation Worker stated that the Service Development and Commissioning Manager had a conversation with the co-opted member regarding how they link into 'Voices Matter'. This was still work in progress.
- The Chairman wished to progress to a position where the co-opted members could present issues raised by young people in care to the Sub-Committee. This would give the Committee a clear indication of the up to date issues of concern for young people in care.
- A Member queried whether mental health or social worker issues had arisen in the feedback collected. The Partnership & Quality Assurance Audit Manager, representing the Participation Team confirmed that this had come up as a theme in the past and that any issues identified were followed up by a social worker.
- A member of the public suggested that an Instagram account could be created in order to receive questions and comments from young people. The Chairman supported any such initiatives that helped facilitate questions from young people. The Participation Worker suggested they could collect feedback through the 'Voices Matter' group. She highlighted that there would still be young people who did not want to attend the events, but would be willing to provide their thoughts through Instagram and Facebook.
- The Assistant Director, Children's Services with assistance from a young person in the audience stated that they could set up an Instagram Story that would outline the topics that had been discussed at the Sub-Committee meeting. The Chairman supported this as an approach for future meetings. (**Action:** The Assistant Director, Children's Services)

Having commented and provided feedback,

It was resolved:

- a) To note the range of consultation events and activities the Participation Service provide for children in care and care leavers.

118. VIRTUAL SCHOOL

The Sub-Committee reviewed the Virtual School development plan and the key priorities for the coming academic year.

Arising from the report,

- A Member raised concerns regarding the 'care-experienced children' phrase found in appendix 1 of the report. The Virtual School Head Teacher clarified that the remit of the Virtual School had extended to children who had previously been in care.
- The Chairman commented that the Sub-Committee wanted to work closely with the Virtual School in order to make sure they were kept up to date on the progress made. She sought more information regarding the Virtual School's link to the Local Offer. The Virtual School Head Teacher stated that these links were continuing to strengthen. She noted that there were ongoing training sessions for social workers on the role of the social worker in education.
- The Chairman sought more information regarding how schools were adapting to the new way the Virtual School was working with them. The Virtual School Head Teacher stated that the model was live from the beginning of this academic year. There was a positive response from schools at the designated teacher's conference in July.
- Members and Officers had a discussion regarding the effective Personal Education Plans (PEPS). A member of the public suggested that PEPs drew attention to the children by taking them out of lessons. It was commented that the child should have a voice in how they contribute to the PEP meeting. Both the Virtual School Head Teacher and The Assistant Director, Children's Services stated that the child's Social Worker should be in attendance at PEP meetings.

It was resolved:

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

119. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Sub-Committee received a report outlining the performances of services for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

In Discussion:

- A Member sought information regarding how long it took officers to produce the report as she would be concerned if officers were taking a long time to research and produce the statistics included as opposed to carrying out their main child related duties. The Officer stated that this report had been produced by the Business Intelligence Team and was therefore not resource intensive from her point of view. Her main role had been to identify themes from the data. The Member was reassured. The Assistant Director, Children's Services stated that the data was reported back to the Department of Education (DoE), it was also used by officers on a daily basis to assist with management oversight.
- The Member commented that officers would be able to learn a significant amount from the data. The Officer agreed as it was used as a tool to identify and analyse themes throughout the year.

- A Member requested an update regarding the Initial Health Assessment data. The Officer stated they were doing as much as they could to improve the collection of this data. She stated that once their database software changed to Liquid Logic the process of collating data would change.
- The Officers and Sub-Committee Members had an in depth discussion regarding the 20 working day deadline for Initial Health Assessments (IHA). The Assistant Director, Children's Services stated that they had problems getting the consent forms to the Looked After Children Health Team in a timely manner. She highlighted that processing consent forms from out of county children was a significant challenge. The Head of Service, Corporate Parenting suggested that they could review their current process and also look at other Local Authorities to see how they overcame this problem.
- The Chairman stated that the Sub-Committee needed to have a clear understanding of the situation. Once this had been achieved, they could take up the issue with the Children and Young People's Committee.

Having reviewed and commented on the performance for Children in Care

It was resolved:

- a) To note the themes and trends identified in the report.

120. ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 2018 – MARCH 2019

With the agreement of the Sub-Committee, the Chairman brought forward this report in the running order on the agenda as Councillor Elisa Meschini needed to leave the meeting which would result in it becoming inquorate with no decisions able to be made.

The Sub-Committee reviewed a report providing an update of Adoption activity 2018-19.

Arising from the report:

- The Chairman commented that the process of moving children out of care into foster care had improved.
- A Member raised concerns regarding the number of adopter recruitment enquiries received compared to the number who were finally approved. The Adoption Support Team Manager stated that individuals when applying often did not realise the difficulty of looking after a child and this only became apparent when they received more detail further into the process.

It was resolved:

- a) To sign off the report for the purposes of Local Authority Adoption Service Regulation and Adoption Minimum Standard 2011

Councillor Elisa Meschini left the meeting at 5:30pm. The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee meeting was now inquorate.

A summary of the informal discussions of the remainder of the agenda is included as an appendix to these minutes.

Chairman
(date)