

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 24 November 2017 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor P Brookes (Chairman)**

### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors B Bainbridge, H Bennett, J Carr, J Charlton, P Crathorne, G Darkes, J Grant, I Jewell, M McKeon, J Makepeace, C Potts, A Reed, G Richardson, A Savory, E Scott, M Simmons and C Wilson

### **Co-opted Members:**

M Baister

### **Other Members:**

Councillor O Gunn (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services)

### **Also in attendance:**

Jacqui Doherty (LSCB Business Manager),  
Helen Fergusson (Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers),  
Andrea Fletcher (Solicitor, Children and Adult Services),  
Mark Gurney (Strategic Manager, Child Protection and Disability),  
Phil Hodgson (Head of Education),  
Clive Horton (Deputy Head, Virtual School),  
Selwyn Morgans (Manager, Aycliffe Secure Services),  
Karen Robb (Strategic Manager, Looked After and Permanence),  
Jac Tyler (Operations Manager, Children and Young People's Services),  
Jayne Watson (Senior Partnership Officer).

The Chair welcomed observers, Tim Pinkney, Deputy Head Teacher of Ferryhill Business and Enterprise College and Jennifer Norman and Catherine Rowland, two of Durham County Council's graduate trainees.

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Considine, E Huntington, O Milburn, H Smith, and, co-opted member, W Taylor.

Apologies were also received from K Clayton, J Geraghty, A Petty and E Seed.

## **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor J Grant substituted for Councillor H Smith.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 20 October 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. The following matters arising were reported:

- With regard to the refurbishment of contact centres, an item has been placed on the funding section of the members' website which provides information about the project and how to contribute to the costs.
- The Senior Partnership Officer advised that all members should have been contacted regarding Regulation 44 visits and any members that have not been contacted were asked to speak to the Senior Partnership Officer after the meeting.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **5 Number of Looked After Children**

Helen Fergusson, Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers reported that the current number of looked after children was 795.

### **6 Establishment of Sub Groups for Aycliffe Secure Centre and Virtual School**

The Panel considered a report of the Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers which sought approval for the establishment of two sub-groups of the Corporate Parenting Panel, Aycliffe Secure Centre Sub-Group and the Virtual School Sub-Group. The terms of reference for the sub-groups were detailed in the report (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Senior Partnership Officer informed the Panel that work is ongoing to appoint co-opted members and it was reported that Rhianna Edwards, Head Teacher of Woodham Burn Community School, had confirmed her appointment as a co-opted member.

In response to a question from Cllr Scott as to how sub-groups are formed, the Chair replied that the process is outlined in the terms of reference which form part of Durham County Council's constitution. Sub-groups must comprise of members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

#### **Resolved:**

The Panel agreed:

- i. The establishment of two sub-groups of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the Virtual School and Aycliffe Secure Centre
- ii. Terms of reference for each sub-group as set out in paragraphs 7 and 12 of the report

- iii. That membership of the sub groups are taken from the membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

## **7 Looked After Children: the Journey into the Looked After System**

The Panel considered a report and presentation of Mark Gurney, Strategic Manager for Child Protection and Disability which explained the journey of children and young people into the looked after system (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

In response to a question from Councillor Makepeace, the Strategic Manager for Child Protection and Disability informed the Panel that the authority has responsibility for care leavers up to the age of 25.

Cllr Richardson observed the significant rise in the number of number of looked after children over the years adding that the ability to manage this increasing workload was testament to the hard work of the staff.

Cllr Reed asked how many young people between the ages of 18 and 25 are currently being supported. The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence replied that over 200 care leavers between the ages of 18 and 25 are currently being supported and only 2 or 3 care leavers have chosen not to maintain contact with the service.

Cllr Grant expressed concern at impersonal terminology used during meetings and in publications which may lead to young people feeling like commodities. The Strategic Manager for Child Protection and Disability agreed that this is an issue which should be borne in mind and this terminology should be reflected on.

Cllr Crathorne spoke positively about her recent visit to the MASH centre and asked whether the centre had led to improvements. The Strategic Manager for Child Protection and Disability responded that the MASH centre has provided a valuable pool of information which has not only helped to speed-up the process but it has also been an indicator of unmet need.

In response to a question from Cllr Makepeace, the Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence advised that the service is supporting 11 asylum seekers.

Cllr Gunn praised the work of the MASH centre and indicated that a visit is being arranged in January. All Councillors are being encouraged to attend the visit as part of their corporate parenting role.

### **Resolved:**

The Panel:

- i. Noted the contents of the presentation.
- ii. Commented on the contents of the presentation.
- iii. Indicated if more information is required from the service.

## **8 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2016/17**

The Panel considered a report and presentation of Jac Tyler, Operations Manager, Children and Young People's Services which provided an overview of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service, Looked After Children and Child Protection Annual Reports for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. The Annual Report was attached to the report as Appendix 2 (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Councillor Darkes referred to the main causes for dispute being delays and he asked what causes the delays and whether measures had been put in place to avoid delays in future. The Operations Manager replied that, in relation to delays in progressing care plans, care plans are very closely scrutinised and there are very tight timescales in place. Where timescales are not met, the matter is escalated to a senior officer and a dispute resolution process is initiated. The Operations Manager informed the Panel that delays are often caused by external factors such as those resulting from expert assessments, or, in cases where parents have a learning disability. Some delays have been caused by staffing levels.

Members commented that the figure of 94% of reviews being held within the timescales was an excellent achievement.

### **Resolved:**

The Panel:

- i. Noted the contents of the report;
- ii. Noted the development of processes to identify, escalate and address practice concerns for looked after children and children with a child protection plan;
- iii. Noted the analysis of practice and the identification of areas for improvement required of Children and Young People's Services.

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Members commented that the figure of 94% of reviews being held within the timescales was an excellent achievement.

**Resolved:**

The Panel:

- iv. Noted the contents of the report;
- v. Noted the development of processes to identify, escalate and address practice concerns for looked after children and children with a child protection plan;
- vi. Noted the analysis of practice and the identification of areas for improvement required of Children and Young People's Services.

**9 Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report 2016/17**

The Panel considered a report of Jane Geraghty, the Independent Chair of Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Jacqui Doherty, LSCB Business Manager, tendered apologies for Jane Geraghty and delivered a powerpoint presentation. The full Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report was attached to the report as Appendix 2 (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Councillor Scott acknowledged the importance of education and awareness for parents and carers in relation to the safety of online material and asked how this was promoted. The LSCB Business Manager informed the Panel that a lot of work had been done in relation to this. Information on online safety was available on the website, provided through schools and through the Empowering Young People group.

**Resolved:**

The Panel:

- i. Noted the content of the report;
- ii. Accepted the LSCB Annual Report for information as an overview of the work undertaken in 2016/17 and priorities for action in 2017/18.

**10 Children in Care Council - Update from Investing in Children and minutes of the Children in Care Council (CICC) meeting held on 24 October 2017**

The Chair tendered apologies for Ellie Seed, Senior Project Worker of the Children in Care Council (CiCC). The following update was provided:

- The first contact centre is being refurbished, with plans to improve eight more. Information is now available on the members' website as to how members can contribute to the project to refurbish the contact centres.

- A very successful meeting of the CiCC and the Corporate Parenting Panel had been held and the notes of the meeting were shared with papers for the meeting.
- The CiCC have put a link on their website so that the young people know who the DCC councillors are within each area. IIC have offered training and mentoring for members to help them understand what they can do to support a looked after young person. Those interested in participating were asked to inform the Senior Partnership Officer.
- The CiCC has contributed to the new adoption guide, which is now in use by the adoption team
- Four members of the CICC delivered workshops at the regional CICC conference. The workshops were very well received, with 39 people taking part.
- The CiCC are involved in the recruitment for the Social Work Academy, and will sit on the interview panels.
- The CICC will run training for potential foster carers on 4 December.
- The CiCC Christmas party will be held on 12 December and members are invited to attend. Any members wishing to make a donation or financial contribution to inform the Senior Partnership Officer.
- Discussions are taking place regarding the possibility of some young people from the CiCC attending meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

## **11 Actions and outcomes from the CICC meeting held on 24 October 2017**

The Panel noted the minutes of the CiCC CPP meeting held on 24 October. At the meeting members and young people discussed promises to support looked after children. The promises were displayed on a powerpoint presentation (for copy of the presentation see file of minutes).

Panel members worked in groups to consider how the promises can be kept, what can done to capture outcomes and how this can be shared with the CiCC. A note of the members' comments was taken.

The Senior Partnership Officer informed members that the next two meetings with the CICC will be held on 17 April 2018 and 23 October 2018. Members were asked to note these dates in their diaries and were encouraged to attend. It is anticipated the events will take place on an evening at the Sjovoll Centre, Pity Me, Durham. Further details will be circulated in due course.

## **12 Fostering Digital Roadshow - Update from Councillor McKeon**

At the meeting on 29 September, members were asked to consider how improvements could be made to the recruitment and marketing of foster carers.

Cllr McKeon informed the Panel that she had attended a meeting with the Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers and staff from the fostering and communications teams, to share feedback from these discussions with regard to the recruitment of foster carers.

Cllr McKeon notified members that it was agreed to launch a digital roadshow to roll-out to a range of community groups across the County during fostering fortnight in May 2018. Cllr McKeon asked members to let her know if they would be interested in participating in the project, or trailing this prior to county wide roll out.

### **13 Any other business**

The Chair agreed the following matters should be reported under any other business:

#### Ofsted Inspection

Helen Fergusson, Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers explained that an Ofsted Inspection on SEND services would be held during the week commencing Monday 27 November, with 12 schools being visited.

#### Framwellgate Children's Home

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence informed the Panel that Framwellgate Children's Home had received an outstanding Ofsted inspection for the third year running. The Panel commended all those who had contributed to this success.

#### Aycliffe Secure Centre

The Panel noted that the new house at Aycliffe Centre is now open.

#### Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers referred to new legislation, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which received royal assent on 27 April 2017. This legislation places additional duties on corporate parents with seven corporate parenting principles. The legislation also includes guidance for implementing a local offer for care leavers and places a duty on authorities to provide all care leavers with a personal adviser up to the age of 25. Members were informed that the final consultation was due to close on 27 November and members were encouraged to inform the Head of Looked after Children and Care Leavers if they had any views they would like to include in the consultation.

#### Regulation 44 Visits

Positive feedback had been received from Cllr Considine following her Regulation 44 visit during which she had observed good communication and speedy access to mental health support within the establishment.

### Visit to Aycliffe Centre

A visit to Aycliffe Centre will take place on 1 December. The Senior Partnership Officer agreed to make enquiries as to whether transport could be arranged.

#### **14 Exclusion of the public**

##### **Resolved:**

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

#### **15 Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board Serious Case Review Process**

The Panel considered a report and presentation of the LSCB Business Manager which provided members of the Corporate Parenting Panel with information on the processes involved in the Local Safeguarding Children Board Serious Case Review (SCR) (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

##### **Resolved:**

That the report and presentation be noted.

#### **16 Regulation 44 visits: Summary Report (including responsive repairs)**

The Panel noted a report of the Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers which provided a summary of the latest Regulation 44 visit action plans and responsive repairs for October 2017 attached as Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 of the report (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Panel noted that Regulation 44 visits for members are now quarterly.

##### **Resolved:**

That the report be received.

#### **17 Service Direct meeting**

The Chair reported that a very positive meeting had taken place at Service Direct and meetings for the forthcoming year have been arranged.