



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date Friday 23 March 2018
Time 9.30 am
Venue Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham

Business

Part A

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend.
Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chairman's
agreement**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2018 (Pages 3 - 8)
4. Declarations of interest
5. Number of Looked After Children - Update from Helen Fergusson,
Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Theme: Foster Carers

Key Line of Enquiry: How well do we support our Foster Carers?

6. Fostering Service Update - Report of Karen Robb, Strategic Manager,
Looked After Children and Permanence (Pages 9 - 14)
 - Presentation from two Foster Carers
7. Development / Discussion Item
8. Children in Care Council - Update from Investing in Children
9. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting,
is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
10. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the
discussion of items containing exempt information.

Part B

Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)

11. Regulation 44 Visits: summary report (including responsive repairs) - Report of Helen Fergusson, Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers (Pages 15 - 40)
12. Regulation 44 Contract - Report and Presentation of Dawn Wilson, Senior Commissioning Officer
13. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Lynch

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
15 March 2018

To: **The Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel:**

Councillor P Brookes (Chairman)
Councillor H Smith (Vice-Chair)

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

Co-opted Members:

M Baister
R Edwards
W Taylor
J Wilson

Contact: Jill Parker

Tel: 03000 269 711

Durham County Council

At a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 23 February 2018** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor P Brookes in the Chair

Panel Members:

Councillors B Bainbridge, J Carr, J Considine, P Crathorne, G Darkes, J Grant, I Jewell, M McKeon, J Makepeace, O Milburn, A Reed, G Richardson, E Scott, M Simmons, H Smith and C Wilson.

Co-opted Members:

R Edwards, W Taylor and J Wilson

Also in attendance:

Chris Bell (Operations Manager, Fostering and Adoption and the Full Circle)
Bayna Brown (Team Manager, Children and Young People's Services)
Kelsey Clayton (Legal Manager, Children, Adults and Health)
Helen Fergusson (Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers)
Tom Gorman (Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager)
Selwyn Morgans (Manager, Aycliffe Secure Centre)
Ellie Seed (Children in Care Council)
Christine Stonehouse (Head of Virtual School)
Jayne Watson (Senior Partnership Officer)

Observer: Karen Davison (Strategic Manager, Children and Young People's Services)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlton, Potts and Savory and from Marie Baister and Karen Robb (Strategic Manager, Looked After and Permanence).

2. Substitute Members

No substitute members were in attendance.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 26 January 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The following matters arising were reported:

Item 3 – It was reported that the Children in Care Council mentoring training held on 30 January had been very well received with 10 Corporate Parenting Panel members and 4 non-CPP members in attendance.

Feedback has been provided to the Children in Care Council. Members thanked J Wilson and all of the young people who had been involved in the event, saying how enjoyable and enlightening the event had been.

Item 7 – Further to the presentation at the meeting held on 26 January, Linda Bailey, Strategic Lead for Progression and Learning, has agreed to provide further information to the Panel in relation to the outcomes for young people on completion of their training with DurhamWorks.

At the January meeting, the Panel raised concerns regarding mental health issues. The Senior Partnership Officer reported that Donna Sweet from Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust will attend the meeting in April to address concerns. Members were encouraged to provide the Senior Partnership Officer with any concerns and issues they would like to raise, by 28 March.

Item 8 – The Children in Care Council is involved in the refresh of the Looked After Guide.

Item 10 – It was reported that the Council's Commissioning Team will be taking over the Regulation 44 function from March. The new providers will attend the March meeting to provide an update and take questions from members.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Number of Looked After Children

The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers reported that the current number of looked after children was 779.

6. Corporate Parenting Panel Performance Framework

The Panel considered a report of Tom Gorman, Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager, which presented an overview of performance in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager explained the draft performance management framework has been formulated using key lines of enquiry identified for looked after children and care leavers by the Local Government Association.

The Chair referred to one of the key lines of enquiry, which is whether members understand their role as corporate parents, saying this is difficult to quantify. He requested that the Panel consider how this could be measured, and provide feedback to the Senior Partnership Officer. J Wilson suggested that the Children in Care Council may be able to assist with evidencing this.

Cllr Considine commented that it would be useful to have more detail on some of the data, for example, a cost comparison of internal and external placements. Cllr Considine also referred to the number of children reported missing during the year and queried whether the figure stated in the report indicates that several young people have gone missing once, or, whether the figure is skewed by one or two young people who go missing on a regular basis.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager informed the Panel that costs for external placements can be made available as the Scrutiny Team had undertaken some research on this previously.

Councillor Jewell asked if there is definition of the point at which a young person is officially classed as missing. Bayna Brown, Strategic Manager, responded that this varies according to the characteristics of the young person and every young person is risk assessed.

Councillor Scott referred to the amount of data in the report saying that although the level of detail is appreciated, it would be helpful if more explanation could be provided.

In response to a question from Cllr Makepeace, the Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, responded that data on care leavers will be included in the performance framework.

Councillor Darkes commented on the number of Social Workers who have a high caseload and he asked what action is being taken to respond to the increasing demands. The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers explained that there are a number of strategies to ensure a recruitment and retention programme is in place. These include the Social Work Academy which supports newly qualified Social Workers, and, Step up to Social Work, and, Frontline which is a nationally recognised programme to attract Social Worker graduates into Durham. The Chair referred to the Council meeting held on 24 January at which the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People provided a detailed response to a question as to the measures being undertaken by the Council to address the upward trend in children requiring support from the Authority.

In response to a question from Councillor Darkes, the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager informed members that copies of the 'strengths and difficulties' questionnaire referred to in the report were available. Councillor McKeon asked if there had been any similar exercise carried out for non-looked after children, in terms of how they see their emotional wellbeing. The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers replied that there may be some data available on general trends. Officers suggested that this matter could be discussed with Donna Sweet, when she attends the meeting.

Referring to independent visitors, Cllr Crathorne asked if more information could be provided on their role. The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, explained that this service is available to all looked after children, however, as most of these young people have a good support network, only a small number of looked after children currently access the Independent Visitor Service.

In response to a question from Councillor McKeon, the Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers responded that authorities have a duty of care to inform other local authorities if they place a child in care within their area, and, whether or not the child is an unaccompanied asylum seeking child can be ascertained.

E Seed and J Wilson of the Children in Care Council referred to the report and observed that there are many other ways that young people in care have opportunities to express their views which are not captured in the report. Officers suggested that these examples could be captured in the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report.

Resolved:

The Panel:

- Noted the latest performance in relation to looked after children and care leavers in County Durham
- Identified any additional performance measures for inclusion in the Performance Management Framework (PMF)
- Consider ways to evidence of the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs), including those not monitored through the Corporate Parenting Panel's Performance Management Framework.

Tom Gorman, Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager left the meeting.

It was agreed that the Education Performance Report would be considered as the next item of business.

7. Education Performance Report Durham Virtual School for Looked After Children

The Panel considered a report and presentation of Christine Stonehouse, Head of the Virtual School, which provided an update on current educational performance for Durham Virtual School (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Cllr Darkes requested that future reports include a breakdown on performance, by gender.

Cllr Makepeace asked for information on how the targets are set. The Head of the Virtual School replied that the Fischer Family Trust targets are used, however, the individual young person is assessed and the targets are adjusted accordingly.

Resolved:

- That the report and presentation be noted.
- That any additional information required in relation to the report be requested.

8. Looked After Children Planning for Permanence: Fostering and Adoption

The Panel considered a report and presentation of Chris Bell, Operations Manager, Fostering and Adoption, which provided an update on the current activity and performance in relation to achieving permanence for Looked After Children including plans for service developments over the over the next 12 months (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Cllr Grant referred to the 73 children who are not yet matched with a permanent placement and asked how long they have been waiting to be matched. The Operations Manager replied that the reasons are very dynamic and he added that there is a national shortage of adopters.

Councillor Makepeace referred to the discussions at a previous meeting which sought to identify ways to increase the promotion of adoption and fostering. The Operations Manager responded that the service is currently working on the development of the fostering digital roadshow to be delivered through AAPs and other community settings and it is hoped that this will be launched to coincide with fostering fortnight in May.

Councillor Jewell referred to the office relocation and continuity around service development and the importance of ensuring the service is available throughout the County. The Operations Manager responded that a hub approach will be adopted, and new ways of working will be embraced, including the use of digital facilities when necessary and appropriate.

Resolved:

The Corporate Parenting Panel agreed to:

- The implementation of the Early Permanence Strategy to deliver a consistent service wide approach to Care Planning for children to remain at home with their families whenever possible and where children need to become looked after their plans are progressed in a timely manner to avoid drift and delay.
- To continue the targeted recruitment of both foster carers and adopters, based upon both the profiles of the children to ensure the provision meets the needs of the most difficult children. To improve effective senior management oversight of all cases where children are looked after to reduce drift and delay and that they achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity.
- To ensure a clear performance framework is developed to effectively report progress to CYPST and to Elected Members.

9. Children in Care Council (CiCC) Update

J Wilson provided the following update:

- There had been very positive feedback regarding the mentoring event on 30 January.
- The event for National Care Day on Friday 16 February had gone well with 51 people in attendance, including members of the Panel.
- The Boiler Rooms in Newcastle have agreed to host a display on 'Life in Care' and there are discussions as to whether this could be displayed at County Hall at a future date.

- Take-up of the Care Leaver challenge had been lower than expected, and, as a result, there are plans to repeat the challenge in October and it is hoped there will be more participation then. Details will be added to Members' diaries.

10. Development Item: Performance

The Performance Management report raised the following questions for Members to consider:

- What are the key messages coming from the performance report?
- Is there anything that we need to address / respond to immediately?
- Does the report give members the necessary information to respond to the key lines of enquiry?

The Panel discussed these questions in groups and a note was taken of the discussion. This will be fed back to the performance team.

11. 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.

12. Regulation 44 visits: summary report (including responsive repairs)

The Panel noted the report of the Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers which provided a summary of the Regulation 44 visit action plans and responsive repairs for January 2018 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the Regulation 44 action plans and responsive repairs for January 2018 be noted.

13. Any other business

Cllr Grant referred to the Care Matters White Paper which aims to improve support for children preparing for adulthood by enabling them to remain with foster carers beyond the age of 18. However, this 'Staying Put' arrangement does not apply to those young people who are in residential care. A campaign has been launched to give young people in residential care the same right as those in foster care. The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers responded that there is a similar initiative 'Staying Close' in Durham for young people in Residential Care which would enable those young people to live near to and retain links with their Children's Home. Bayna Brown, Strategic Manager, added that the Service is looking into the implications of this.

Corporate Parenting Panel

23 March 2018



Fostering Service Report

Report of Karen Robb, Strategic Manager Looked After Children and Permanence, Children and Young People's Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview to the Corporate Parenting Panel of the recent changes within the Fostering Service and to provide assurance to Elected Members in relation to the key lines of enquiry (KLOE's) within the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Parenting resource packs.

Introduction – Context of fostering and the Fostering Service Restructure

- 2 The statutory requirements of the Fostering Service are to provide placements to all those children who need to become Looked After by the Local Authority and their best interests are to be promoted by living within a family setting. This is a statutory duty for the Council who is required to meet its "Sufficiency Duty" which states that it must take steps to secure, as far as possible, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after. This is requirement across the Looked After Service in relation to residential care, supported lodgings and leaving care provision.
- 3 The Fostering Service was subject to a formal review of its structure in 2016 to ensure the service was meeting its statutory duties and that the service was more aligned to the wider structure of the service to meet the needs of looked after children. This became a particular issue as a result of the rising numbers of looked after children from 2015-2016 and to ensure the service was able to meet these needs. The findings of this review and recommendations resulted in an implementation plan for the new structure of the Fostering Service, which commenced in 2017.
- 4 The Key Principles of the revised structure are as follows:
 - (a) To create a dedicated Placement Service which is responsible for all requests for children needing to become Looked After to ensure that the service provides a timely and consistent response and ensures it secures the most appropriate placements for children. This includes all types of provision, mainstream foster care, Family and Friends Foster Care and Residential Care. It will also provide the sourcing of external provision for children and young people where this is felt to be the most appropriate resource to meet their needs.

- (b) Directly aligned locality based Fostering Teams to ensure consistent and targeted support is provided to foster carers, which encourages peer based support and promotes community focussed support.
 - (c) These directly aligned teams will also ensure closer links with the Families First Teams where children's care plans are being developed and will ensure a role within each of the Legal Panels.
 - (d) To maintain a dedicated Recruitment and Assessment Team who are responsible for ensuring that the service continues to maximise the recruitment, assessment and approval of new carers in line with the increased demand for looked after arrangements for children and young people.
- 5 The Fostering Service, along with the Adoption Service, have relocated from their premises at Langley Moor to Spectrum 8 at Seaham. This move-took place at the beginning of March. Despite some initial reservations from staff the move has gone smoothly and teams are settling in. The facilities are greatly improved and the opportunity to work flexibly will support the Fostering Service staff working more closely with other teams across the County.

Fostering in Durham – The current situation

- 6 Durham County Council are currently supporting 305 foster care families, 246 mainstream foster carer families and 59 Family and Friends foster carers.
- 7 All Fostering households including those carers who are looking after children under Family and Friends arrangements, have an allocated fostering social worker, who provides advice, guidance and support. They will also supervise the foster carers to ensure they are meeting Fostering Regulations and standards to promote the safeguarding and care of children they are looking after. The social worker ensures that each foster carer has a direct supervision session at least once per month which ensures that they are listened to and supported but are also encouraged to develop their skills through training and professional development.
- 8 There is a culture of learning within the Fostering Service and the Service provides a comprehensive training programme for foster carers which includes mandatory and core training through taught courses and e-learning as well as access to nationally recognised courses. Carers are supported within their first year following approval to complete the Training and Development Standards which are a legal requirement.
- 9 The Full Circle Team are instrumental in offering a range of support to foster carers and their foster children. This includes direct support in the form of assessments of children, and consultations and ongoing support sessions to foster carers to assist them in caring for a child. Direct therapeutic work is also provided to a significant number of children in foster care as a result of their previous experiences of neglect and abuse. The Full Circle also provide training to foster carers developing and supporting their needs around attachment and loss, understanding the impact of trauma and neglect and

recognising the direct impact these experiences have on looked after children as well as the secondary impact of caring for a child who presents with such difficulties.

- 10 The Fostering Service closely monitors placements, which are unsettled, and with the Care Team work together to identify and provide additional support to stabilise the placements. This includes support from the Edge of Care Service, which has two dedicated workers to support foster care placements.
- 11 In circumstances where a longer term or permanent placement breaks down when everything has been exhausted to support the placement, a Disruption Meeting is held to identify issues contributing to the breakdown, identify any shortfalls in support and any actions necessary to ensure learning from it. Learning points are disseminated in team development sessions within the Fostering Service and across the Looked After Children Teams.
- 12 All allegations and serious concerns made against foster carers are fully investigated in line with policies and procedures. All foster carers have access to independent support from an Advice and Mediation worker FROM Fostering Network in addition to support available from the Fostering Service. There have been 18 allegations or concerns investigated this year. One couple have been de-registered as result and there are three ongoing allegations. The majority of foster carers have continued to foster following the satisfactory conclusion to the investigations.
- 13 There have been no formal complaints received by the Fostering Service.
- 14 Each Fostering family are also required to have an Annual Fostering Review, which ensures that the placement continues to offer the children in placement the necessary care and support, but also celebrates the foster carer's achievements, the successes in placements over the year, and sets targets for the carers to ensure they continue their professional development.
- 15 The Fostering Service also ensures that support groups are held each month for carers to attend, which allows them access to peer support and information. There are also quarterly consultation sessions, attended by the Operations and Strategic Manager, to ensure that foster carers are consulted and informed about service development issues and they are also given the opportunity to share their views to help to shape future service improvements.
- 16 In terms of recruitment of foster carers, the Fostering Service continues to work innovatively and proactively in a very challenging and competitive marketplace to recruit new carers. The Service has a clear Marketing and Recruitment Strategy created jointly between the Fostering and Adoption Services and designated colleagues in communications and marketing, to ensure that advertising and promotional opportunities are maximised and that the right message about becoming a foster carer is projected to the public.

- 17 Existing foster carers are encouraged to be part of this process and to contribute through offering their views and experiences. A foster carer needs analysis has been completed which provides an up to date plan of the types of carers that the service needs, to ensure that the marketing and recruitment activity targets activity which will yield the best results.
- 18 In addition to marketing, the Recruitment and Assessment Team also hold regular information events for members of the public, at varying times and venues, to ensure the service is as approachable and accessible as possible to prospective new carers. Our commitment to interested carers is to provide a complete, thorough assessment in line with legal requirements and regulations, which ensures that the safety of any child placed, is paramount, and is carried out in a timely manner that makes the process as simple and manageable for prospective carers as it can be.
- 19 In terms of performance targets the Fostering Service aims to have 29 newly approved households. This will equate to 40 placements during 2017-18, which compares to 25 households (2016-17) and 22 households (2015-16).

The Placement Service is beginning to see an improvement in maximising placement opportunities for children who require foster care and alternative provision. A consistent team who have the placement capacity oversight and the improved direct links to foster carers is beginning to demonstrate some early results in relation to reducing the requests for Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements and offers a more quality approach to information shared with carers.

Key Lines of Enquiry: How well does Durham support its foster carers?

- 20 The Fostering Service has been consistently commended by Ofsted for the levels of support provided to foster carers and the service provided to children. Foster Carers state they feel well supported by the Service to meet the needs of children they are caring for who often have challenging and complex needs. This can be considered in the context of the findings of the Fostering Network's State of the Nation Report 2016, in which carers identified the following areas that required improvement:
- a) Improved communication and support
 - b) Being treated more as a professional
 - c) Better financial support
- 21 Levels of communication and support to foster carers is a strength of the service and overall foster carers are happy with this aspect. The Fostering Service has looked to develop and build upon this to provide the best possible service. The Fostering Service website is regularly updated and provides information and items of interest to all carers and their families. The service ensures that all carers, whether mainstream or Family and Friends carers, have an allocated social worker and that they have a direct supervision in their home every month. This ensures regular communication, feedback and

support and their progress is formally reviewed each year. Monthly support groups are facilitated by the service and it is hoped that these can be further developed in the coming year to encourage the support to become more peer focussed and based, so foster carers support other foster carers. The quarterly consultation meeting also provide carers with an opportunity to feedback about the service and also to be involved as a stakeholder in future decisions about the service moving forward and enables them to become involved in service developments

- 22 The Full Circle is an essential service to looked after children and is highly valued by foster carers in the support they provide to looked after children and their foster carers. It also is a key factor in the successful recruitment of new foster carers for Durham.
- 23 Durham Children and Young Peoples Service recognise the integral role foster carers have in young people's lives and their attendance at professional meetings concerning children they are caring for is fully encouraged and supported. Foster carers are given the opportunity to share their views at these meetings as they are the people who know the children well.
- 24 The annual foster carer review is a statutory requirement and is focussed on the carer's professional development to ensure foster carers are encouraged and supported to attend training and to complete a portfolio of evidence to support their own learning, development and progression.
- 25 In relation to financial support, Durham's Fostering Service fully recognises and celebrates foster carers skills with regard to allowances and fees. The service is competitive across the North East region to ensure that foster carers are supported in the task of caring for children. The 'Payment for Skills' approach links the payments carers receive to the assessed level of skill and expertise that they have as a foster carer. This is a fair and equitable approach that ensures that carers are assessed and reviewed in terms of the level of care they provide and paid accordingly. This enables the service to offer a variety of placement types to meet the needs of children which are often very variable and also ensures equity to Family and Friends Foster Carers.

Recommendations:

- 26 The Corporate Parenting Panel is requested to consider the report which is anticipated to provide reassurance that the service continues to ensure effective support to looked after children in foster care, maintain placement stability and reduce the risks of placement breakdowns.
- 27 The Fostering Service Annual Report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in Summer 2018.

Contact: Chris Bell Operations Manager Fostering & Adoption
Tel: 03000 269453

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance The Fostering Service has a defined budget which is at present under some pressure due to the rising numbers of children being looked after.

Staffing The Fostering Service is now fully staffed and has received additional staffing to ensure the Placements Service was established which ensures the service maximises any placement capacity and directly informs the overall Sufficiency Strategy to ensure we have sufficient carers to meet needs.

Risk N/A

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty N/A

Accommodation The Fostering and Adoption Service has recently relocated to Spectrum 8 in Seaham. This building is of a very high standard and enables teams to be located together. It has also yielded rental savings which is in line with the Councils Accommodation Strategy.

Crime and Disorder N/A

Human Rights All children and young people have the right to experience a family life. This is particularly important for looked after children who by their very nature are more vulnerable and may have experienced disadvantage prior to becoming looked after. The Fostering Service aims to recruit and approve foster carers with a variety of skills and experience to meet their needs.

Consultation Foster Carers are regularly consulted over any changes in the service and are actively invited to be involved in any changes within the service and service improvements.

Procurement– N/A

Disability Issues The Fostering Service must ensure it meets the needs of disabled children and young people within its provision.

Legal Implications The Fostering Service must continue to meet its statutory and legal duties in relation to children's safeguarding and standards of provision to children who are looked after. The Ofsted framework places significant expectations on the service in this regard.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank