

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Friday 26 April 2019 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor P Brookes in the Chair

Panel Members:

Councillors Bainbridge, Charlton, Considine, Crathorne, Grant, Richardson, Scott, Simmons, Smith and Wilson

Co-Opted Members:

C Baines, young persons representative of the Children in Care Council

Also in attendance:

Kelsey Clayton – Legal Services Manager

Helen Fergusson – Head of Children’s Social Care

Martyn Stenton – Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children

Jayne Watson – Senior Partnership Officer

Dawn Wilson, Senior Commissioning Officer (presenting item 6)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jewell, McKeon, Milburn, Potts and Savory, from co-opted members M Baister, K Myers and W Taylor, and, from officers S Morgans, K Robb and C Stonehouse.

2 Substitute Members

No substitute Members were present.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 29 March 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 29 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. The following matters arising were reported:

Item 10 – Provisional arrangements are being made to hold the Signs of Safety Training on 6 June. Members were asked to respond to the email from Ann Whitton, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, in order that an appropriate venue for the meeting can be arranged.

Item 15 – It was reported that the refurbishment of the One Point Hub has been completed and Members were thanked for their contributions. A press release will be done when further refurbishments have been completed.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Number of Looked After Children

The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Panel that the number of Looked After Children was 837 as at 26 April. The detailed written reports will resume as soon as possible for future meetings.

With the Chair's agreement agenda item 8 was considered as the next item of business, followed by agenda items 9, 7 and 6.

6 Ofsted Updates

Ofsted updates were discussed under item 11.

7 Update from Investing in Children

The young people of the Children in Care Council referred to the joint meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Children in Care Council which was held on 20 March and they informed the Panel of some of the issues discussed at that meeting including the following:

- **Foster Carers**

The young people discussed how important it is to be provided with information about foster carers, prior to moving to a placement, as this makes the process less daunting. They also discussed some of the concerns they had regarding inconsistencies with boundaries, including the use of social media and mobile phones.

- **Corporate Parent Profiles**

The young people asked for the information displayed in the residential settings, about their Corporate Parents, to be more interesting and personal.

- **Risk Assessments**

Young people raised concerns that information being provided about them to potential foster carers, in advance of placements, can sometimes be very negative. Work has taken place to adapt the form so that it is more balanced, however, further work is required.

- **Freedom Cards**

Young people are concerned that the freedom card offer is lacking. Investing in Children agreed to look into what other local authorities offer, and further work will take place to consider how the Freedom Card can be improved.

- **Relationships with Foster Carer's Social Worker**

Young people suggested it would be beneficial for them to have meetings with the Foster Carer's Social Workers to enable them to share their thoughts on the placement, and feed into the foster carer annual reviews.

It was agreed that work will take place outside of the meeting to address issues raised. The young people were thanked for their input and it was agreed that this had been a very useful exercise, which should be repeated twice per year, following the joint CPP/CICC meetings.

8 Regulation 44 Inspections Provider Update

The Panel received a presentation from Dawn Wilson, Senior Commissioning Officer which included information on the Children's Homes Regulations 2015, commissioned providers and independent children's residential homes in England and Scotland (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

Councillor Scott suggested that it would be beneficial for new Members to accompany more experienced Members on visits initially, and that this would be particularly useful when visiting the Secure Centre.

Members discussed that they would like to visit homes more frequently. The Panel noted that they had previously agreed that the frequency of visits should be quarterly and that this should be adhered to. It was acknowledged that these are homes for the young people and that visits should not impose.

In a response to a request from Councillor Grant, the Senior Commissioning Officer agreed to provide information on the number of young people moving into and out of homes, on a monthly basis.

Councillor Crathorne asked how information is provided to the young people in Children's Homes and the Senior Commissioning Officer clarified that information is provided on corporate parents, ward councillors and independent visitors, on display within homes and online.

In response to a question from Councillor Richardson, the Senior Commissioning Officer advised that visits should take place with the allocated Commissioning Officer, however, on occasions when it is not possible to arrange a joint visit, Members may attend visits alone following prior discussion and agreement with the Commissioning Officer. Members comments from the visit must be shared with the Commissioning Offer for inclusion in the Regulation 44 report.

Members agreed that homes allocated for Regulation 44 visits should remain the same for a further year, for continuity purposes, given that there have been some changes recently to the management structures within residential settings.

It was agreed that the briefing note outlining the role of members in Regulation 44 visits, which was previously circulated should be recirculated.

9 Foster Carer Awards

The Panel viewed slides on the foster carer awards (for copy see file). Members requested that that all Corporate Parenting Panel Members be invited to the awards ceremony in future and the Head of Children's Social Care agreed to look into this.

10 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.

11 Regulation 44 Visits Summary Report

The Panel considered the monthly update on Regulation 44 visits and outstanding responsive repairs (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved

That the report be received.

12 Any other business

The Head of Children's Social Care updated the Panel on the new Senior Management arrangements.

The Panel noted the Ofsted updates in respect of Tow Law and Framwellgate Moor Children's Homes and a brief discussion took place on the sufficiency strategy.

In response to a request from Councillor Crathorne, it was agreed that an update on Cedar Drive would be provided at a future meeting.