

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 28 April 2023** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor M Simmons (Chair)

Members of the Panel:

Councillors M Walton (Vice-Chair), R Adcock-Forster, J Charlton, B Coult, S Deinali, J Griffiths, C Hunt, B Kellett, J Miller, A Reed, I Roberts, K Robson, K Rooney, A Sterling, S Townsend and C Varty

Co-opted Members:

Damon, J Gamble, Luke, S Neale and W Taylor

Also Present:

Jane Ayres – Strategic Manager, Families First
Sharon Davey – Strategic Manager, Children in Our Care
Rachel Harris – Service Improvement Manager
Jodie Henderson – Practice Lead, Children and Young People
Rob Johnson – Project Manager, Investing in Children
Rachael Riley – Operations Manager, Children Looked After and Care Leavers
Paul Rudd – Strategic Manager, Children’s Homes
Mark Smith – Strategic Manager, Commissioning
Martyn Stenton – Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
Melanie Stubbs – Head of the Virtual School
Laura Turner – Interim Team Manager, Families First
Jayne Watson – Senior Partnerships Officer
Julian Wilson – Lawyer, Children and Adults Services

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Cochrane, O Gunn and T Henderson, from Co-opted Members J Bell and R Woods and from officer R Farnham.

2 Substitute Members

No substitute members were in attendance.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 31 March 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The following matters arising were reported:

- Members met on 20 April to discuss the Panel's response to the independent review of children's social care 'Stable Homes, Built on Love'. The agreed response will be submitted by 11 May.
- The 'Don't Forget Us' campaign video was presented to a meeting of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A meeting was held with the Marketing team to follow up the concerns raised by the Children in Care Council, however, as progress is now being made, a decision was taken that the video will not be shared more widely at this point in time.
- The Senior Partnerships Officer shared the Corporate Parenting Panel's good luck cards which were sent to those young people who are due to sit exams. The Panel congratulated all those involved in producing the cards at such short notice and it was agreed that good luck cards will be sent annually, at exam time.
- The Chair informed the Panel that an invite was sent to regional Chairs for an initial discussion meeting to set up a regional CPP Chairs / Vice Chairs network. The meeting will be held after the local elections and the Panel will be updated on progress.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Number of Children Looked After and Care Leavers

The Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children informed the Panel that the total number of children looked after stood at 1,076, including 28 young people placed for adoption, 59 unaccompanied asylum seeking young people (UASC) and 289 care leavers.

6 Ofsted Updates

It was reported that Hudson House is now fully approved as a new children's home and the new children's home at Meadowfield is expected to be approved in the near future. Anne Haigh has been appointed as the Centre Manager of Aycliffe Secure Centre and the transition home at Maple House is in the final stages of registration. An open event is planned to take place on the afternoon of Monday 15 May 2023 to which members of the Aycliffe Sub-Group will be invited.

7 Annual Summary Report of the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership (CLASP)

The Panel received the annual summary of the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership (CLASP) for March 2022 to March 2023, presented by the Strategic Manager for Children in our Care (for copy see file of minutes).

The Panel noted the approach is very much multi-agency and the eight strategic priorities are designed to align with the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel. Members were thanked for their support in the work undertaken to review foster carers' payments for skills. Future developments will include a project to increase health passports for young people and the launch of the second Mockingbird hub. In addition, the young people's scrutiny panel, which the young people have named 'Experts Through Experience With Ideas', will be embedded.

Sarah Neale, Designated Nurse for Children in Care, updated the Panel on developments in mental health support, explaining that the children looked after health needs assessment which had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is now being progressed and will link with Public Health work. The work will include input from children looked after, to inform the future plans.

In response to a question on the arrangements for sexual health advice and support, the Designated Nurse clarified that information is provided as part of the universal offer, the annual review health assessment process and support is also provided through the Care Leavers' Hub. A working group has been established to focus specifically on vulnerabilities and sexual health and this includes representation from the Designated Nurse. How to manage sexual health conversations is also part of foster carer training.

It was also noted that, in response to language discussions at Corporate Parenting Panel meetings, the Placement Team is now called the Home Finding Team and Disruption Meetings are now referred to as Next Chapter Meetings.

8 Proud Moments

The Strategic Manager for Children in our Care spoke of how proud she was of Damon who had been instrumental in driving the discussion on budgets and savings at a recent Children in Care Council meeting. It was also reported that Luke has gained a part-time job in hospitality with Newcastle United football club. Luke spoke of how the job will be perfect for him as it will add to his CV and the hours will fit in well with his university studies.

9 Children in Care Council Update

The Panel received a presentation from Investing in Children on recent activity by the Children in Care Council (CiCC) (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

Highlights included that additional funding had been granted for the Art and Wellbeing Café following the project receiving the High Sheriff award. Luke was pleased to report that he has been selected as a representative on the Children's Commissioner's Care Experienced Advisory Board.

Luke alluded to the discussion at the joint CICC /CPP meeting held the previous evening, at which the two proposed priorities for the coming year were discussed, namely life skills and savings. Investing in Children will discuss these proposals with wider groups of care experienced young people who were not at the event, or who do not link with the CiCC, to seek their views before a decision is made.

The Panel praised the amount of work undertaken by the CiCC and thanked Luke for the consistently high standard of his presentations.

10 Entry into Care Packs

The Operations Manager, Children Looked After and Care Leavers delivered a presentation on the entry into care packs (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

The Panel heard that the packs had been developed following a suggestion by the CiCC and Damon demonstrated one of the packs, which the young people have named 'Supply Packs'. The packs are age appropriate and are designed to provide young people with belongings which bring them comfort, particularly in emergency situations. The Operations Manager explained the ask of the Panel was for £7,600 to launch the pilot project to create 150 packs. The Panel congratulated the young people for their work on the project.

During the discussion, Members agreed that they would like to help to launch the pilot as soon as possible and the finance could be raised through the Corporate Parenting Panel Members' neighbourhood budgets, however, all Members as corporate parents, may wish to make a contribution. It was noted that Members may have committed their budgets as it was the end of the financial year. It was agreed that an approach would be made to all Members of the Council to request contributions to launch the pilot. Councillors Walton and Sterling offered to contribute the full amount in the event that the finance could not be raised.

The Senior Partnerships Officer agreed to make enquiries with regard to future funding, should the pilot project be a success.

11 Children Looked After with a Disability Annual Update

The Panel received a report and presentation from the Strategic Manager, Families First and Children with Disabilities Team on the work of the Children with Disabilities Team (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Panel received a summary of progress made since the ILACS Ofsted Inspection in September 2019, including changes to the service for children and young people with disabilities and the remodelling of the service to create a 0-18 children's service and transition arrangements for 14-25 year olds. Members were provided with information on the support offered to ensure young people have a voice and can express their views directly or through digital technology such as the Mind of My Own apps.

The Strategic Manager highlighted that the Children with Disabilities Team received the Gold Award for Investing in Children and the Panel viewed a video in which a Disabilities Team Social Worker expressed how much she enjoys her job and helping young people to develop communication skills.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Progress Report on the Care Leavers' Strategy and Action Plan

The Panel received a report and presentation from the Practice Lead for Children and Young People on the strategy and action plan for care leavers (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Information was provided on the support provided for care leavers in respect of finance, housing, physical and emotional health and education, employment and training. The Practice Lead was pleased to report that the majority of care leavers are in suitable accommodation and the service had worked with partners to respond to the needs of the increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. The Practice Lead also highlighted the work done to prepare young people for adult living through pathway plans and the development of co-dependency skills. Plans for the future include the establishment of two further Care Leavers' Hubs.

In response to a question from the Panel as to the help available for UASCs who arrive with little knowledge of the language, the Practice Lead explained that the Home Office provides valuable information on their cultural needs.

An interpretation service is available 24 hours a day and many young people and their carers use translation apps on mobile devices. The Panel heard that many of the UASCs find that socialising and participation in team sports also helps them to integrate and to develop their language skills.

Luke pointed out that the young people have discussed extending the entry into care packs project, if the pilot is successful, to those leaving care and the packs would include useful information on issues such as accommodation and finance.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

13 Ask for Angela Update

The Strategic Manager for Children in our Care updated the Panel that meetings had been held with young people to progress the Ask for Angela campaign. The young people commented that they would like to target information to young people, by creating a poster to display how young people can raise awareness if they do not feel safe. They suggested that they would like to use some of their artwork for the poster, which could be displayed in public areas such as family hubs, schools and GP surgeries. Further information will be provided to the Panel as the work progresses.

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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

15 Regulation 44 Visits and Regulatory Body Ratings of Independent Children's Residential Homes

The Panel considered a report presented by the Strategic Manager for Commissioning which provided an overview of the Regulation 44 visits and regulatory body ratings of independent children's residential homes in which Durham children and young people are placed (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.