

Durham County Council

At a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 28 July 2017** at **10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor P Brookes (in the Chair)

Panel Members:

Councillors B Bainbridge, H Bennett, J Carr, J Charlton, J Considine, P Crathorne, E Huntington, M McKeon, J Makepeace, C Potts, A Reed, G Richardson, M Simmons, H Smith and C Wilson

Also in attendance:

Kelsey Clayton (Legal Manager, Children and Adult Services), Helen Fergusson (Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers), Ann Haigh (Deputy Manager, Aycliffe Secure Centre), Irene Lavelle (Strategic Lead for SEND, Standards, Improvements and Virtual School Head), Andrew Moss (Business Manager, Aycliffe Secure Centre), Carole Payne (Head of Early Help, Assessment and Safeguarding), Karen Robb (Strategic Manager, Looked After and Permanence), Jayne Watson (Senior Partnership Officer)

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman introduced attendees. This meeting was the final meeting for Carole Payne and Irene Lavelle and the Chairman thanked Carole and Irene for all their hard work and wished them well. The Chairman welcomed Helen Fergusson, Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, who will be the new lead officer for the panel.

The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor Morris Nicholls whose funeral was held on Friday 21st June.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Darkes, Jewell, Milburn, Savory, Scott and from officers, Marie Baister, (Designated Nurse, Looked After Children) and Selwyn Morgans (Centre Manager, Aycliffe Secure Centre).

2. Substitute Members

No substitute members were in attendance.

3. Declarations of Interest

With reference to item 6, Councillor Makepeace declared an interest as an employee of Wrixon Care Limited.

4. Minutes

With an amendment to the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2017 to include apologies from Councillors C Potts and G Richardson, the minutes were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Number of Looked After Children

The Head of Early Help, Assessment and Safeguarding, informed the panel that the number of looked after children was 794. The number of looked after children would be a standard item of business for future meetings and the panel would be provided with not only the figure but also information on ages and placement profiles periodically. Members were notified that a weekly LAC update is provided to officers therefore information is available upon request.

6. Looked After Children Annual Report 2016/17

The Head of Early Help, Assessment and Safeguarding, presented the Looked After Children Annual Report 2016/17 and introduced Karen Robb, Strategic Manager, Looked After and Permanence. The Strategic Manager referred members to the report and delivered a powerpoint presentation which explained some of the key elements (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

In response to a request from Councillor Makepeace for more information on the 189 care leavers, the Strategic Manager responded that the young people are aged between 18-25 years and they are classed as eligible or relevant under the Leaving Care Act. It was agreed that a detailed report on care leavers should be brought to a future meeting of the panel.

Councillor Charlton commented that the presentation was very informative adding that it was interesting to note that the two age profile groups identified as priority areas are children under the age of 4 years and the 10-15 age group, and that a high number of looked after children come from the east of the county. The Strategic Manager responded saying that there are various factors in a child's circumstances which may lead to them entering the care system including behavioural issues with the onset of adolescence, mental health, school refusal and deprivation. Councillor Huntington referred to children under 4 and commented that bonding issues may be a risk factor. The Strategic Manager explained that the vulnerable parent pathway helps to identify vulnerable parents and the service does a lot of work with vulnerable parents both at the pre-birth and post-birth stages. The Strategic Manager added that the service is increasingly involved with families who have issues with multiple children which suggests that some families become trapped in a cycle.

The Legal Manager for Children and Adult Services, Kelsey Clayton, briefly explained how children initially enter the care system including through care orders made by the courts or through voluntary arrangements, adding that there has been a significant increase in the number of care orders in recent years, and, an increasing incidence of families being involved in repeat care cases, having successive children removed.

The Legal Manager for Children and Adult Services offered to present a report on care proceedings to a future panel meeting and the Chairman welcomed this.

At this point in the meeting, Councillor Makepeace declared an interest as an employee of Wrixon Care Ltd.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

7. Aycliffe Secure Services Update

Ann Haigh, Deputy Centre Manager of Aycliffe Secure Services, presented the update report on Aycliffe Secure Services and delivered a powerpoint presentation which included information on the homes at Aycliffe Centre, the school, specialist services and key findings from the recent Ofsted inspection (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Chairman advised that any member wishing to visit the centre should contact Jayne Watson, Senior Partnership Officer, (Tel. 03000 268 371), who would arrange this.

In response to a question from the Chairman as to how the panel would like to be kept informed on matters relating to looked after children and secure services, it was agreed that the panel would require, at the minimum, an annual update and ideally a six-monthly update.

In response to a question from Councillor Reed as to how the young people are reintegrated into the community, the Deputy Centre Manager explained that this is done on a phased return with specialist social work and youth offending support where appropriate.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

8. Corporate Parenting Panel sub-group and panel representation

The Senior Partnership Officer, Partnerships and Community Engagement, presented the Corporate Parenting Panel sub group and panel representation report (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Members identified additional sub / group and panel representatives and the Senior Partnership Officer advised that an updated list would be circulated in due course.

The Senior Partnership Officer informed the panel that membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel includes six non-voting co-opted members consisting of three school representatives and three representatives from other agencies.

It was proposed that the authority to appoint co-opted members would be granted to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, in consultation with the Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and, that the appointments be staggered for two years and four years, to provide consistency.

Resolved:

- i. That additional sub group / panel representatives be identified.
- ii. That Member representation on sub groups / panels for 2017/18 be ratified.
- iii. That Co-opted Members be appointed.

At the request of Councillor Charlton, the Chairman agreed that the agenda item on Regulation 44 Visits would be considered as the next item of business.

9. Regulation 44 Visits Summary Report

The Head of Children's Services presented the Regulation 44 Visits Summary Report (for copy of report see file).

The Head of Early Help, Assessment and Safeguarding, informed the panel that interim arrangements for the Regulation 44 Visits are working well. She then went on to explain the feasibility study that had been undertaken.

In response to a question from Councillor Richardson, the panel was informed that members' visits would commence in September and that members would be contacted directly by the provider in relation to arranging joint visits.

Resolved:

That the action plans for May and June 2017 be received.

10. Children in Care Council (CICC)

The Chairman provided an update from the Children in Care Council. The Panel was informed that 'Become' charity will be holding a 'North East Passport to Parliament' event on 17 August to inform young people how to use politics for change. Information on this would be circulated to the panel. It was reported that representatives from the CICC will meet with Cllr Potts, Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on 8 August. Other activities that the CICC are currently involved with include work on the review of the Health Passport and the development of material for foster care training.

11. Exclusion of the public

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 paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

12. Durham Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Update

Irene Lavelle, Strategic Lead SEND Standards and Improvement, Virtual School Head Teacher, presented an update on Durham Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus and delivered a powerpoint presentation (for copy of report and presentation see file).

It was agreed that the Virtual School Pupil Premium would be revisited in the autumn.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

13. Responsive Repairs

The Chairman informed the Panel that he and Councillor Bennett had attended a monitoring meeting at Service Direct and that Councillors Brookes and Bennett would continue to be the representatives on the Service Direct sub-group.