

Durham County Council

At a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 27 April 2018** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor H Smith in the Chair

Panel Members:

Councillors Bainbridge, Bennett, Carr, Darkes, Grant, Jewell, McKeon, Savory and Simmons

Co-opted Members:

R Edwards and W Taylor

Also in attendance:

Chris Bell (Operations Manager, Fostering and Adoption and Full Circle)
Kelsey Clayton (Legal Manager, Children, Adults and Health)
Helen Fergusson (Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers)
Selwyn Morgans (Manager, Aycliffe Secure Services Centre)
Christine Stonehouse (Head of Virtual School)
Donna Sweet (Service Manager, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
Jayne Watson (Senior Partnership Officer)

Observers:

K Myers, The Oaks Secondary School
R Perry, Public Health

The Chair introduced Trish Lambert, Senior Practitioner and a Care Leaver who were in attendance to participate in the discussion on mental health issues.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brookes, Charlton, Considine, Crathorne, Makepeace, Milburn, Potts, Richardson, Reed, Scott and Wilson and from officer, Karen Robb, Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence.

2. Substitute Members

No substitute members were in attendance.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 23 March 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Senior Partnerships Officer reported the following matters arising:

- Item 7 - Councillor Considine is now a member of the Fostering Panel
- Item 9 - Councillor McKeon has joined Cllr Grant on the Care Leavers Steering Group

- Item 12 - The Senior Partnerships Officer will circulate a reminder to members requesting their information which will be passed on to Children's Homes.

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 presented the Weekly Looked After Children Numbers report (for copy see file of minutes) which provided members with a breakdown of the weekly Looked After Children numbers by age group and length of time in care. It was reported that the current number of looked after children was 798.

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

6. Mental Health Support at Aycliffe Secure Services Centre

The Panel received a report and presentation from Selwyn Morgans, Aycliffe Secure Services Centre Manager (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes) which provided details of the range of mental health support available to young people residing at Aycliffe Secure Services Centre. The presentation included an explanation of the Secure Stairs framework including its context, principles and implementation.

In response to a question from Cllr Darkes as to the age range of the young people cared for at the Centre, the Secure Services Centre Manager responded that the children may be as young as 10 years, however, the majority are in the 12 to 18 age range. Placement of a child in secure accommodation under 13 years must be approved in advance by the Secretary of State for Education.

Cllr Darkes then asked what measures are in place to ensure continuing care on leaving secure accommodation. The Secure Services Manager replied that careful planning takes place weeks in advance which includes the consideration of any care plans in place, with the aim being to place the needs of the child first. Cllr Grant referred to some negative reports where agencies have failed to work effectively together and the Secure Service Manager responded that there are examples of good practice however issues can be raised, and challenged as necessary, through the Secure Accommodation Network, the DfE and the Ministry of Justice.

Cllr Jewell referred to the number of specialist health professionals employed at the Centre and asked how they work together to support the young people. The Secure Services Manager replied that the young people often display challenging behaviour on a daily basis which can be very demanding on staff. He added that training and support for staff is essential. Cllr Bainbridge commended the staff on their good rapport with the young people which she and Cllr Charlton had witnessed on their recent visit to the Centre.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

7. The Full Circle

Chris Bell, Operations Manager, Fostering and Adoption and the Full Circle delivered a presentation on the Full Circle service which provides therapeutic services for looked after children, adopted children and young people and children in need (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

Cllr Darkes referred to the main risks identified being mental health problems, social and relationship difficulties and school and workplace issues and asked if any one of the risks is more prevalent. The Operations Manager replied that research suggests that the impact of trauma affecting placement / parenting increases the risk of these mental health issues.

Cllr McKeon asked, in cases where a child in foster care has self-harmed, what measures are in place to assess the child's risk of further self-harm. The Operations Manager informed the Panel that children in foster care have a multi-agency team to support them.

R Edwards referred to post adoptive placements and the requirement for families to be reallocated a social worker which the family may perceive to be a negative reflection on them. The Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers responded that this issue is periodically reviewed, and, where a child requires therapeutic support, a broad network of support is offered, not only social work support.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

8. Mental Health Discussion

At the January Panel meeting, members raised concerns regarding a lack of support for young people with mental health issues and members requested that their concerns be shared with appropriate officers. The Chair welcomed Donna Sweet, Manager of Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to the meeting to address these concerns. CAMHS offers therapeutic services for children, young people and their families with emotional and mental health problems.

The Manager of CAMHS explained the single point of access for all referrals within County Durham, with an initial appointment being offered within four weeks of referral. Tier two services are early help services and tier three services are more complex, specialist areas. An important aspect of the work of CAMHS is the work undertaken with parents and the service provides training for parents in order that they may co-facilitate support sessions. Where a young person is found to require tier three services, they are offered a second appointment within nine weeks of their initial appointment with interventions being aligned to the individual needs of the young person.

The Manager of CAMHS referred to reports of issues with the transition from children's mental health services to adult mental health services. CQUIN (Commissioning for Quality and Innovation NHS) is a framework which supports improvements in services and patterns of care and one of the targets within this framework is that 90% of young people must have a transition plan in place, with CAMHS working with an adult mental health worker, by the age of 17 years 6 months.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Manager of CAMHS explained that the Crisis Team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. Interventions are tailored to suit the child's needs and CAMHS staff work alongside care coordinators.

9. Development / Discussion Time

Trish Lambert, Senior Practitioner, Children and Young People's Services and a Care Leaver were welcomed to the meeting to participate in the discussion on mental health issues.

At the January Panel meeting, Care Leavers spoke of their experiences of the care system and raised some issues regarding mental health issues. The issues included a lack of provision during the transition from CAMHS to adult mental health services which led some young people to feel vulnerable when they were discharged at the age of 18. Concerns were also raised with regard to cases being closed when only one appointment had been missed. One young person who had struggled with mental health issues from the age of 11, reported having to rely on Children and Young People's Service staff for support.

In relation to cases being closed due to missed appointments, the Manager of CAMHS stressed the importance of good engagement with social workers, and, she clarified that two telephone calls should be made and then a follow-up letter sent adding that cases should not be closed without further investigation. The Manager of CAMHS explained the importance of attending regular appointments as this is part of the therapeutic alliance and there is valid therapeutic need for young people to attend appointments regularly.

Cllr McKeon asked how the CAMHS service links with GPs. The Manager of CAMHS replied that quarterly training events take place with GPs and referrals can be made directly by GP surgeries.

R Edwards referred to some instances when no CAMHS staff member has attended Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings. The Manager of CAMHS said that this may be a capacity issue, however, if a staff member cannot attend, a report should be provided. The Manager of CAMHS agreed to look into this matter.

Cllr McKeon then asked how informed young people are as to what services CAMHS has to offer. The Manager of CAMHS replied that, at the second appointment, the young person is informed of the various pathways and options regarding interventions.

In response to a question from Cllr Jewell, the Manager of CAMHS described a typical crisis scenario for CAMHS as being a phone call from a parent saying their child has a knife and is self-harming.

To respond to this, CAMHS would not send staff into this situation, but they would work with emergency services on behalf of the family to support the young person/situation. However, the team also deals with other, less critical issues, such as visiting parents at home to offer support to young people with behavioural problems, although this would not be classed as a crisis.

10. Children in Care Council

The Senior Partnerships Officer gave the following update on the recent meeting held with the Children in Care Council on 17 April. Cllrs Darkes, Charlton, and Jewell attended the meeting. The following issues were discussed including:

- Improving care plans to make them more child friendly
- Improving transport
- Issues around Council Tax
- Social Worker contact
- Apprenticeships
- Clothing / toiletries budgets
- Complaints / compliments
- The relaunch of The Promise
- Representation on the Supported Lodging Project

Councillor Jewell referred an issue being raised at the meeting about a lack of careers advice being offered at special schools. The Head of the Virtual School assured the Panel that all special schools deliver careers advice although it may be delivered in a less formal setting than formal careers lessons.

It was suggested that the issues raised by the young people will be picked up as areas of focus for the panel over the coming year, and will be incorporated into the CPP Annual Report.

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 March 2018 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

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

13. Any other business

The Manager of Aycliffe Centre informed the Panel that a number of people from a Serbian Correctional Facility were due to visit HMYOI Wetherby, however the visit had been cancelled and they contacted the Manager of Aycliffe Secure Services Centre to ask if the party could visit Aycliffe instead. The visit was coordinated last minute and the guests from Serbia had been very impressed with the facilities, the support and the level of investment at Aycliffe.

The Manager of Aycliffe Centre informed the Panel that the Prison and Probation Ombudsman report relating to a recent incident at Aycliffe is now finalised.

The Panel noted that maintenance and facilities management at Aycliffe will transfer to Service Direct from 1 May 2018.