

Durham County Council

At a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 29 June 2018** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor P Brookes in the Chair

Panel Members:

Councillors B Bainbridge, J Charlton, J Considine, P Crathorne, J Grant, I Jewell, M McKeon, O Milburn, A Reed, G Richardson, A Savory, E Scott, M Simmons and H Smith

Co-opted Members:

W Taylor

Also in attendance:

Michelle Baldwin (Strategic Manager, Public Health)
Kelsey Clayton (Legal Services Manager)
Jane Lowther (Looked After Children Nurse, North Durham CCG)
Selwyn Morgans (Manager of Aycliffe Secure Centre)
Karen Robb (Strategic Manager, Looked After and Permanence)
Ellie Seed (Investing in Children)
Stephen Tracey (Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager)
Jayne Watson (Senior Partnership Officer)

The Chair welcomed observers, Mr N Harrison of St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College and a young person from the Children in Care Council.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chair informed the Panel that a JTAI multi-agency inspection will commence on 9 July 2018, examining domestic abuse.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carr, Potts and Wilson, from co-opted member Marie Baister, and, from officers Helen Fergusson and Christine Stonehouse.

2. Substitute Members

No substitute members were in attendance.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 25 May 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Senior Partnership Officer informed the Panel on the following matters arising.

- A letter of thanks on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Panel has been sent to former co-opted member Riannon Edwards. Additional school representation is being sought.
- Item 3 – All members have now provided their profile details and these have been forwarded to Children’s Homes. At the January meeting, the Panel suggested that residents of Children’s Homes may wish to use anonymous comments cards. The system has been implemented and comments are now being received.
- Item 10 - The Communications Team is planning the roll-out of the Fostering Digital Roadshow.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Weekly Looked After Children Numbers

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence presented the weekly Looked After Children numbers (for copy of report see file of minutes).

It was reported that, as at 22 June 2018, the number of Looked After Children was 806.

In response to a question from the Panel, the Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence advised that the highest number of Looked After Children recorded was 824.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

6. Ofsted Update

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence delivered a presentation on the inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

Cllr Reed referred to the Ofsted inspection in 2011 which judged Durham’s Children’s Services as outstanding and the Ofsted inspection in 2016 which judged the service as requiring improvement and suggested this may be due to changes in the Ofsted requirements.

The Chair commented that, following the publication of the Ofsted report in 2016, an improvement plan was put in place which made several recommendations including the strengthening of political and management oversight. As a result changes have been made which include changes to the functions and administration of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Councillor Scott asked whether there had been any improvements in the continuity of Social Workers. The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence replied that the Authority strives to provide stability for those in permanent care, but recognised that there are more challenges within the Families First Teams. Work is ongoing in relation to improving the recruitment and retention of social workers, particularly in service areas where this is an issue. The problem is common to many Authorities which is leading to increased competition in recruitment.

Councillor Grant referred to a recent report by the Children's Commissioner regarding the protection of safeguarding budgets adding that although this seems to be a positive step, this may be at the detriment of other budgets which support services, working with families to prevent them from needing safeguarding services.

Councillor Jewell referred to the voice of the children of the Children in Care Council being included in the framework relating to the experiences of Looked After Children and Care Leavers and he asked how representative the Children in Care Council is. Ellie Seed from Investing in Children explained that the Children in Care Council is as representative as is possible, with representation from a core group of members who are from foster care, residential care and supported lodgings. In addition, the organisation works with other services including schools and a great deal of work is done with foster carers to encourage the children they care for to join the Children in Care Council, and young people from the CICC take part in the fostering events every 2 months.

7. Health of Looked After Children

The Panel considered a report and presentation delivered by Jane Lowther, Looked After Children Nurse which provided health information focussing on the key lines of enquiry set out in the Local Government Association's corporate parenting resource packs for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

In response to a question from the Chair, the Looked After Children Nurse explained that the term global developmental delay is used to describe a delay in every element of a child's development.

Cllr Smith asked for further information on health passports. The Looked After Children Nurse responded that a pilot was carried out in 2016 with young people from County Durham and Darlington and the young people were encouraged to have an input into the development of the passports. The passports include birth information, and a full summary of health issues and illnesses, including any genetic disorders. The passports include signposts to health websites. At present the passports are in paper form at the request of young people as many young people do not have smartphones.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

8. Health Needs Assessment of Looked After Children

The Panel considered a presentation of Michelle Baldwin, Strategic Manager for Public Health on the Health Needs Assessment (HNA) for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

Officers advised that although the data on the health of Looked After Children across Durham and Darlington states that approximately 10% of young people reported having mental health issues, the actual figure for young people in care who have mental health or emotional difficulties is significantly higher at approximately 50% compared with 10% of young people in the general population.

Cllr McKeon referred to the work done on teenage pregnancy and sexual health and asked what provision there is for this in special schools. The Strategic Manager for Public Health informed the Panel that targeted work is being undertaken specifically with young people with special needs.

Cllr McKeon then asked whether consideration is being given to the problems faced by Looked After Children living in the rural areas of County Durham. The Strategic Manager for Public Health replied that this is under constant review to improve access. A mobile sexual health unit is available and there is partnership working with the Area Action Partnerships to mobilise resources to 'hotspot' areas with the most need. Information is also available online and the Public Health team works closely with Commissioning colleagues to improve access to GP services.

Councillor Jewell asked the Strategic Manager for Public Health how much assurance is provided by key stakeholders that they will deliver the recommendations. The Strategic Manager informed the Panel that there is a good relationship with key stakeholders who take ownership of actions and clear governance arrangements are in place. The Chair advised that the Strategic Partnership Board will drive forward the recommendations.

Cllr Charlton asked if the Panel could be provided with information on the number of young people in care whose children are also in the care of the Local Authority. The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence responded that this information will be provided for a future meeting, adding that some of the young people have planned pregnancies and make very capable parents.

9. Quarter 4 Performance Report

The Panel considered a report and presentation of Stephen Tracey, Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager which examined the performance for the fourth quarter of 2017/18 (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence clarified that there is good performance on the average length of time between a child becoming looked after and being placed for adoption, as information in the presentation was contrary to this.

Members were asked to consider the performance scorecard, and let the Senior Partnership Officer know if there are any questions or further clarification required around this. Members also requested to consider if any additional performance data or information is required.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10. Children in Care Council

Ellie Seed from the Children in Care Council introduced a sessional worker with the Children in Care Council. The Panel congratulated the young person on successfully achieving a place on the Social Work training course. Ellie Seed then provided the following update on recent activities at the Children in Care Council:

- 'The DCC Promise' has been redesigned to take account of suggestions from young people and this is now at the printing stage.
- A fun day is planned to take place on the 1 September from 12 noon to 3 pm and it is hoped that new members to the Children in Care Council will be recruited at that event. The event will launch the DCC Promise, and the Looked After Guide.
- The regional LAC Council residential event is being held in July to plan the Annual Conference.
- Young people are appealing for funding for an arts project to capture life in care through music, arts and dance.
- Representatives from Investing in Children will attend the Durham Women's Gala, and will give a care leavers address at the event.
- Work is also ongoing to secure funding to refurbish contact centres across the County, enabling young people to have the best possible experience when spending time with their families.

11. Health of Looked After Children

In groups the Panel discussed questions posed on the health of looked after children including whether the health needs of young people in care are being met and is there further work to be done to address their needs. A note was made of the discussion.

12. 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.

13. 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 May 2018 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Senior Partnership Officer asked Members who have not agreed dates for joint Reg 44 visits, to contact relevant staff within the Commissioning Team.

Resolved:

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

14. Additional Quarter 4 Performance Report Costings

The Panel considered a presentation delivered by Stephen Tracey, Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager which outlined the costs of placements for Looked After Children.

Members commented on the differences in the costs of the various placement types. The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence informed the Panel that friends and family carers are paid a professional fee on reaching Level 3 and they are offered the opportunity to progress to that level.

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence also stated that the costs for IFA placements include on costs, whereas these are not included in the in house placement costs.

15. Any other business

The Senior Partnership Officer reminded the Panel that contributions have been requested in respect of the project to refurbish contact centres. The Senior Partnership Officer requested that members wishing to contribute do so as soon as possible. A reminder email will be sent out to Corporate Parenting Panel members and the Senior Partnership Officer will liaise with Members' Support.