

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Friday 19 October 2018 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor P Brookes (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors H Smith (Vice-Chair), B Bainbridge, J Carr, J Charlton, J Considine, P Crathorne, G Darkes, J Grant, I Jewell, M McKeon, J Makepeace, C Potts, A Reed and E Scott

Co-opted Members:

C Baines, M Baister, N Harrison and W Taylor

Also in Attendance:

Kelsey Clayton – Legal Services Manager

Jayne Watson – Senior Partnership Officer

Ellie Seed – Senior Project Worker, Investing in Children

Helen Ferguson – Head of Children's Social Care

Christine Stonehouse – Head of Virtual School

Selwyn Morgans – Manager, Aycliffe Secure Centre

Michelle Baldwin – Strategic Manager, Public Health (presenting agenda item 9)

Karen Robb – Strategic Manager for Looked After Children and Permanence

Social Workers

- Louise Woolfe
- Lindsey Craig
- Michelle Patrickson
- Jeff Riley

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O Milburn, G Richardson, A Savory, M Simmons and C Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

No substitute members were in attendance.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair,

The following matters arising were reported by the Senior Partnership Officer:

- Members were advised that Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will host a workshop to go through findings from the JTAI inspection report on Thursday 8 November 2018 in Committee Room 2, County Hall.
- Mr C Baines, head teacher at Howden le Wear primary school has been appointed as a Co-opted Member of the Corporate Parenting Panel, replacing Rianna Edwards as the primary education representative.
- Members were encouraged to take part in the activities scheduled to take part next week during care leavers week.
- Letters of congratulations have been sent to Aycliffe Secure Centre and Framwellgate Moor Children's home on the back of their recent inspection outcomes.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declaration of interest.

5 Weekly Looked After Children Numbers

Helen Ferguson, Head of Children's Social Care presented the weekly looked after children numbers (for copy of report see file of minutes). It was reported that the number of looked after children was 823 which was lower than the previous week.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

6 Early Permanence Strategy

The Panel considered the report of the Strategic Manager, Looked After Children and Permanence which provided an overview of the Children and Young People's Services Early Permanence Planning Strategy 2018-20 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor Scott asked how much of a risk was there of the adoption not proceeding.

Officers responded that although possible, the risk was very small after a placement order had been granted.

Councillor Jewell asked if adopters were keen to foster first.

The Strategic Manager for Looked After Children and Permanence responded that they offered training during assessments and supported them throughout their journey, but stressed that if fostering first it is not the right choice for the adopter then they shouldn't be persuaded to do this.

Resolved

That the report and the Early Permanence Planning Strategy 2018-20 be noted.

7 Adoption Service and Adoption Panel Annual Report 2017/18

The Panel considered the report of the Strategic Manager, Looked After Children and Permanence which provided Members of the Panel with an executive summary of the Adoption Service and Adoption Panel Report 2017/18 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager for Looked After Children and Permanence advised Members that it was national adoption week and that work is underway to recruit additional adopters to meet increased demand.

The DFE has approved the proposal for Durham County Council Adoption Service, Cumbria County Council Adoption Services, and Sunderland Now Together for Children registered as a voluntary adoption agency, along with the four adoption agencies of After Adoption, Barnardo's, ARC and DFW adoption to establish a Regional Adoption Agency to be known as Coast to Coast.

Councillor Bainbridge referred to the disparity between children who have a Placement Order and those who are matched with adopters.

The Legal Services Manager responded that the local authority cannot place a child for adoption unless a Placement Order has been made by the court. This means there are a small number of children whose plans change after the order is granted and the child is not adopted.

Councillor Grant asked for an age breakdown of the young people waiting to be adopted. The Strategic Manager for Looked After Children and Permanence responded that there are currently 7 sets of siblings, 3 sets of twins and advised that children tend to be under the age of 7.

Cllr Grant also asked if it is easier for babies to be adopted.

In response the Strategic Manager for Looked After Children and Permanence advised that this is usually the case, however there has been a lot of success within DCC with older children too.

Councillor Darkes asked if there was a social theme influencing the increase in numbers. The Head of Children's Social Care provided details of the reasons why children were removed, including problematic use of drugs and alcohol, mental health issues, non accidental injuries to children and young people as well as families who have repeat cases of children being taken into care, and advised that Durham was no different to the national statistics.

Resolved

That the report and the Annual Report of the Adoption Service and Adoption Panel Report 2017/18 be noted.

8 Development Session with Adopters

Michelle Patrickson, Senior Practitioner, Children and Young People's Service was in attendance to provide a presentation on the work of her team who work with children who have a plan of performance by the way of adoption or long term fostering ages 0-7 years. They work closely with the Adoption Team and the Full Circle Team to progress plans of adoption for children. They also work alongside the 15 Families First Teams as part of the twin tracking process and write the Child's Performance Report (for copy of slides, see file of minutes).

Examples of children and young people's life story books were shared with members of the Panel.

An adoptive parent was also in attendance to share her recent positive experience of adopting with Durham County Council.

Louise Woolfe and Lindsay Craig from the Full Circle Team were in attendance to provide a presentation on the post-trauma therapeutic service for children, young people and their families and carers. The age range was up to 18 years old this was extended to 25 for care leavers and those eligible for Adoption Support Fund (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

Councillor Jewell thanked everyone for their contributions and acknowledged that as a member of the adoption panel, it is good to hear positive stories as some of the decisions that have to be made can be very challenging. Cllr Jewell advised that it is good to see how the services all link in to support families.

Councillor Smith suggested that The Full Service offer should be available for all adoption agencies to offer.

Councillor McKeon asked what percentage of young people need the support of The Full Circle. Officers advised that a high percentage of complex cases receive support.

The age ranges are split, however there is a peak at approx. age 7, with more boys than girls typically receiving support.

Councillor Grant expressed how good it is for members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to hear what we do as a council, and appreciate the wide range of work being undertaken - was a very powerful presentation.

Councillor Reed has had experience of The Full Circle in her role as a foster carer and praised the excellent service and training received for both carers and the young people.

Resolved

That the presentations be noted.

9 Recommendations from Health Needs Assessment (HNA) of Looked After Children

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Public Health that provided Members with the final draft of the key finding and proposed recommendations from the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Health Needs Assessment (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Michelle Baldwin, Public Health Strategic Manager, Adult and Health Services was in attendance to present the report. She advised the panel that the recommendations had been presented to the Integrated Steering Group for Children, and the LAC Strategic Partnership. The LAC Strategic partnership will have the lead for the recommendations and actions in the HNA.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

10 Update from Investing in Children

A briefing note on the Care Leavers Week Activities was circulated to Members at the meeting (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The following update was provided by Investing in Children's from the Children in Care Council (CICC):

- On 23 October 2018 young people from the CICC will host a meeting with members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- On 26 October 2018, Investing in Children are hosting a Family Fun Day at the Sjøvoll Centre. The aim is to get more people involved in the CICC.
- Young People continue to delivered training to social work students at Newcastle University, on their experience in care, and to share good practice on including the voice of the child in their practice.
- Young people have been working with the North East Social Work Alliance to develop an information guide, which will be include the voice of children, young people and their carers. IIC will be involved in this work and will be looking to produce a video too.
- Young people are applying for a £500 grant from the Key Fund to undertake a range of activities with the CICC.
- Amber and Ellie are attending foster carer events to encourage families and young people to engage with the CICC.

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

The Panel noted the report of the Head of Children's Social Care which provided a summary of the Regulation 44 visit action plans and responsive repairs for September 2018 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved

That the report be noted.

13 Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme

The Panel considered the report of the Senior Partnership Officer, Transformation and Partnerships that provided Members with an update on the work programme for 2018/19 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Resolved

That the report be noted.