

Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 13 July 2017

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Welcome Koussoukama

Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Rita Potter

Cllr Paul Sweet

Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

Employees

Dawn Deans
Esther Douglas
Michelle Earp-Gaskell
Alison Hinds
Andrew Scragg
Helen Tambini
Alice Vickers
Laura Wood

Senior Social Work Manager - Adoption
Social Worker/Foster Care Worker
Senior Social Work Manager
Head of Looked After Children
Youth Service Participation Worker
Democratic Services Officer
Corporate Parenting Officer
Senior Social Work Manager - LAC Transitions

The Chair welcomed Sarah Peace, County Manager for Looked After Children's Services at Staffordshire County Council who was attending the meeting as an observer.

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Moran and Waite, Linda Sanders, Strategic Director and Emma Bennett, Service Director for Children and Young People.

2 Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

3 Change to the Order of Agenda Items

The Chair moved that agenda item 6, Children in Care Council (CiCC) – My New Friend Activity, be considered after item 4, Matters arising and before item 3, Minutes of the previous meeting and item 5, Schedule of outstanding matters.

Resolved:

That agenda item 6 be considered after item 4 and before items 3 and 5.

4 Matters arising

The Chair introduced Laura Wood, Senior Social Work Manager – LAC Transitions who would be briefing the Board on the number of Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CL) who were expectant parents and/or young parents and what support the Council offered.

Laura Wood referred to some of the issues facing LAC and CL which could result in them becoming teenage parents including; a culture of low aspiration and attachment related difficulties, disrupted education and lack of education regarding sexual health, substance misuse and generally negative assumptions towards LAC and CL.

There were currently 51 expectant parents and/or young parents, three were LAC and 48 CL. Three of those have more than one child.

The Council was recording data on the new ICT system Eclipse to help identify trends and target support.

In respect of preventative work, the LAC Transition team were supporting young people in several ways. The LAC nurse was co-located one day a week within LAC to support increased partnership working and encourage young people to access weekly support. That included Drop in Friday for CL where the LAC nurse offered advice, support and guidance. Information regarding city-wide sexual health services was being distributed, including contraception clinics such as EMBRACE. Members of the LAC team were also trained in C card distribution.

In respect of support services, the LAC transition team provided good quality care regarding looking after children. There was a young parent group every Sunday morning at The Way. There were early help services to ensure the young person has specific support regarding parenting skills, this was a 'whole' family approach.

Specialised midwives visited young people twice a week until the child was two and the team monitored pregnancies more closely to ensure adequate support was available.

Members of the Board asked how LAC and CL coped with looking after their babies, the percentage of babies removed and how those figures compared to the general population.

Laura Wood confirmed that assessments were made and young people could be referred for more specialised support, the percentage of babies removed was low and it would be possible to look at comparative figures for the general population and notify the Board.

Councillor Potter queried how young people coped if they continued to become pregnant.

Laura Wood confirmed that independent support was offered to identify if circumstances had changed since the previous pregnancy and if not, how those circumstances could be changed before a person became pregnant again.

Resolved:

1. That the verbal update be noted and a copy of the briefing note be circulated to the Board.
2. That comparative figures for the general population in respect of the number of babies removed from parents be circulated to the Board.
3. That an update report be submitted to the Board in six months.

5 Children in Care Council (CiCC) - My New Friend Activity

Members of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) attended the meeting and took part in an introductory activity with members of the Board, facilitated by Andrew Scragg, Participation Officer.

Members of the Board thanked the children for attending and stated that they looked forward to seeing them again soon.

6 Minutes of the previous meeting - 18 May 2017

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2017 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

7 Schedule of outstanding matters

The Chair presented the report on current progress on matters previously considered by the Board.

In respect of the Corporate Parenting Strategy Update, Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer confirmed that she had sent a request to identify who had completed the training. A Councillor Induction Programme was being developed and an introduction to all councillors was scheduled for 11 January 2018.

In respect of Councillor visits to establishments, Councillor Potter confirmed that her visit to Merridale Street West had now been arranged.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

8 **Wolverhampton Fostering Annual Report April 2016 to March 2017**

Michelle Earp-Gaskell, Senior Social Work Manager presented the Wolverhampton Fostering Annual Report April 2016 to March 2017 and highlighted key points.

Michelle Earp-Gaskell confirmed that of the 20 carers that had been deregistered in 2016/17, none had been offering placements for a significant period and had sat on a dormant list. They had been dormant for a variety of reasons including; health issues, career break or adoption leave. The approval of 21 fostering households in 2016/17 meant that although the foster care numbers had only increased by one, placement capacity had increased by 21.

Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children confirmed that the Council was striving towards increasing resources for foster carers. The number of internal foster carer placements had increased from 158 in 2014 to 193 as at 31 March 2017 and it was hoped to build on that.

Councillor Potter asked for assurance that foster carers were well supported to ensure their retention.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 **Foster Carers**

Esther Douglas, Social Worker/Foster Care Trainer introduced Laura and Stephen Bayliss, Emma Goodwin and Marie Spragg to the Board.

The Chair welcomed the foster carers and thanked them for attending the meeting. She referred to the recent Ofsted inspection which had graded Children's Services as good and asked the foster carers if that was their experience of the service and if they could identify any improvements.

Emma Goodwin stated that she had been caring for the same child for seven years, since they had been 15 months old and during that time she had been well supported. In terms of contact with siblings, her child kept in contact with their sibling and they shared the same Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

Marie Spragg stated she had experienced difficulties when her social worker had been on maternity leave and then working part time; however, now her social worker was back she received the necessary support.

Michelle Earp-Gaskell confirmed that rather than having four part time posts, there were now two full time posts which worked more effectively. Part time working could be effective in those roles, if it was carefully managed.

The Chair asked the foster carers if the training offered was appropriate and helpful?

Marie Spragg stated that when she was looking after a baby it had been hard to attend all the mandatory training. Training was essential; however, sometimes it felt like the training was too late and it was then hard to understand why children behaved in a certain way.

In response, Esther Douglas, Social Worker/Foster Care Trainer confirmed that additional courses had been arranged for the evenings and weekends to ensure that people working could attend. It was hoped that Joginder Shoker-Kang who undertook the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) training on therapeutic parenting would be able to do that as a course.

Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children confirmed that Joginder also had one to one consultations which foster carers might find helpful.

Marie Spragg stated that she was pleased to see new faces at the Forum meetings. People had also been asked to suggest discussion items.

Laura Bayliss commented that some people were put off attending the Forum meetings as the same issues were continually discussed and often arguments occurred which discouraged some people from attending.

Esther Douglas confirmed that she was currently chairing Forum meetings; however, it should be a foster carer and it was hoped that someone would volunteer. It was also pleasing to have officers attending meetings. It was hoped to set up a Facebook page, with the assistance of an experienced Marketing officer.

Emma Goodwin suggested that it would be helpful if foster carers could regularly attend Board meetings.

Members of the Board stated that it would be advantageous to have regular input from foster carers and agreed in principle to two representatives being nominated. It was suggested that in the interim, foster carers be invited to nominate two people to attend as observers at the next meeting.

Members of the Board thanked the foster carers for attending the meeting and providing input and looked forward to their future attendance.

Resolved:

That the Board recommends in principle that two foster carers be nominated to join the Corporate Parenting Board in order that one foster carer can attend each meeting.

10

Adoption Scorecard 2013-16 Analysis

Dawn Deans, Senior Social Work Manager presented the Adoption Scorecard 2013-16 Analysis report and highlighted key points.

The Chair stated that every child should have the opportunity to be adopted where appropriate even if that took time and if that affected the A1 indicator that was acceptable.

Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children confirmed that the Ofsted inspectors had recognised and acknowledged the considerable work undertaken to decrease the timescales and the difficulties associated with placing children with more challenging issues.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

11 **Performance Monitoring Report**

Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children presented the Performance Monitoring Report for May 2017 and highlighted the key points.

Alison Hinds stated that during the last three months a number of children over 13 had not been placed and that was due to them being a hard group to place internally.

Alison Hinds referred to the continued decrease in the percentage of children that participated in their own reviews and she confirmed that the reasons for that were being investigated. It had been hoped that the introduction of the MOMO app would encourage participation; however, since its introduction the percentage had continued to fall. Officers would need to look historically at the way reviews were undertaken to find the best way forward.

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer confirmed that the Children in Care Council (CiCC) had welcomed the introduction of the app; however, members were not using it. The issue was discussed at the Foster Carers Conference and it was hoped that would encourage its use. It was also important to remember that teenagers often did not think that LAC reviews were important, particularly if they were happy with their current circumstances.

Alison Hinds confirmed that the percentage of health checks had fallen from 91% to 87%. That was due to the majority of those children living out of the city; however, the situation would continue to be monitored.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 **Exclusion of the press and public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information contained in paragraph 1 of the Act, namely information relating to an individual.

13 **Councillors visits to establishments**

The Chair confirmed that she would be undertaking a formal visit to Pendleford Farm in the Autumn.