

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 9 February 2015

Present:

Councillors:

Peter Fowler
Bob Hicks
Jenny St John
Chris Williams (Chair)

Officers

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader, Children's Participation
Ruth Lewitt, Apprentice
Ann Mawdsley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Sue Ross, Interim Head of Service
Andrew Sjurseth, CAMHS Commissioner
Brenda Vincent, Service Manager - South

Also Present:

Tania Miller, Journeys

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Clive Rickhards, Councillor Dave Shilton and Councillor Bob Stevens.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

None.

2. Journeys Service Annual Report

Andy Sjurseth introduced the report and outlined the work of the Journeys Service, which was commissioned with Coventry City Council to work with children and young people in care or adopted, and to support foster carers and practitioners. He added that 72% of children and young people in care would experience emotional wellbeing issues, and this service was aimed at early intervention and the prevention of the escalation of these issues.

Tania Miller stated that Journeys had been running for three to four years and was made up of a multi-disciplinary team of practitioners working from a systematic perspective to wrap the most appropriate system around a child or young person. She outlined the different aspects of the service.

During the ensuring discussion the following points were raised:

1. Referrals came from social workers, GPs, schools, school nurses, CAMHS and from children and young people and their carers, with the largest number of referrals coming from social workers.
2. Journeys worked with children and young people from the age of 0 to 19 and noted the importance of involving parents/carers in that work in order to continue support to these children outside of the service.
3. Journeys was part of a wider system of support for mental health and wellbeing and represented the early intervention support that was being considered in the wider redesign of the CAMHS service that was currently taking place.
4. Where children were not able to express themselves verbally, different methods such as sand trays, art and puppets were used to help children to process stories, without overwhelming them.
5. Both qualitative and quantitative evidence was used to measure outcomes. Andy Sjurseth agreed to circulate the latest Q4 data.
6. The Service had worked hard to reduce the waiting times between referral and intervention, which was currently two weeks. Andy Sjurseth added that a lot of effort had been put in to improve the relationship between the Service and specialist CAMHS, but Journeys had also developed towards holding more specialist services than originally expected, which reduced the number of children and young people moving between these services.
7. Over the last year the caseload average at any time was approximately 70 cases. It was pointed out however that the Service provided relatively short-term interventions, which resulted in a high turnover. Tania Miller responded that the Service always balanced the clinical needs of children despite the need to keep waiting lists down and the quality of services good.
8. When asked whether there was any research to monitor whether improvements were ongoing, Tania Miller responded that there was not the capacity to do this currently, but that not many children and young people came back into the Service. She added that expectations had to be realistic, and that for some young people whose circumstances were in turmoil, the best the Service could do was to contain and support them, and more permanent changes would not be possible until their lives were more settled.
9. The CAMHS Redesign was an opportunity to reshape services to meet early intervention better. It was agreed however that at some point

there would need to be a strategic discussion across services such as schools and Public Health to ensure a common agenda.

The Chair thanked Tania and Andy for their contributions, commenting on their clear enthusiasm and commitment to make a difference. The Panel agreed to receive a further report in due course.

3. Children in Care Council (CiCC) updates

Councillor Chris Williams - 2 December 2014

The Chair and Shinderpaul updated the Panel on the CiCC meeting on 2 December 2014, particularly the work being done on 'Digital by Default' looking at IT solutions that support care leavers. A business case on the options was being produced and this would be brought to the Panel.

Due to a mix-up on the date of the next CiCC meeting (10 February 2015), Brenda Vincent undertook to represent the Panel.

Shinderpaul Bhangall updated the Panel on the recent CiCC elections which had resulted in seven new members. There were now six males and seven females on the CiCC from a broad geographic spread across the county, ranging in age from 14 to 19. The different roles on the CiCC would be up for election at their March meeting.

4. Update from Strategic Lead and Performance Dataset

Brenda Vincent informed the Panel that the Local Authority had a legal requirement to make a statutory visit to children and young people in care within a week of placement and thereafter up to six-weekly. She reported that this was tracked on a weekly basis and last week had been the best week ever for the service.

Brenda reported that the 'Being in Care' booklet would be considered by the CiCC at their meeting on 10 February. Once they had signed it off, the booklet would be printed and given to all 8-13 year-olds in care.

Brenda noted that the CiCC had reviewed the playing cards to highlight where updates were required. Ruth Lewitt would be doing this work.

An Adoption Support Fund would be accessible from May/June. This was a one-off pot of funding from Government for Local Authorities to fund additional therapeutic services. Arrangements were being made to ensure good systems were in place to access this funding, access services and evaluate outcomes.

Brenda introduced the report outlined the sibling policy and guidance and the Delegation of Authority to Foster Carers.

Brenda tabled an updated version of the dataset, which she then reported against.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. Members requested a report on the centralised leaving care services to a future meeting.
2. There needed to be an investigation into the reasons why placements in Nuneaton and Bedworth have continued to rise, while in all other areas they had stabilised and in some cases begun to reduce.
3. Members noted their concern at the target to reduce the number of LAC. Sue Ross confirmed that if by the middle of 2015 there had not been a significant reduction in the north, this would have to be reviewed. She added that the Local Authority had a duty to take children into care and reducing this numbers was not always possible. Members agreed to receive a further report on this to the April meeting.
4. Brenda Vincent undertook to invite Councillors St. John and Williams to a meeting set up to review the Corporate Parenting training module.
5. Ann Mawdsley undertook to share with all Members, the information on LAC by Division and School and the set of questions included in the agenda pack.

The Chair thanked Brenda for her report.

5. Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) Annual Report

Mary Eccleston introduced the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Service.

There was a broad discussion around the lack of benchmarking data. Mary Eccleston noted that Warwickshire had participated in research undertaken by the National Children's Bureau which had resulted in recommendations about standardised reporting. It was hoped that these recommendations, alongside comparisons that were being made at a regional level, would lead to a system of benchmarking in the future.

Brenda Vincent drew Members' attention to the review by the IRS of care plans for all children and young people in care. 80% of plans were seen to be progressing well, and while there were a small number of ambers, relating mostly to paperwork, but there were no red alerts. She added that this ongoing monitoring was very helpful to her service.

The Panel agreed to receive the next Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report and a Benchmarking Report to the September meeting.

6. Work Programme

The work programme was agreed, including the updates agreed at this meeting.

7. Any Other Business

The Panel agreed that there needed to be training planned for elected members in preparation of an Ofsted visit. Sue Ross agreed to co-ordinate this.

The following rota was agreed for Councillors attending the CiCC meetings:
Tuesday 10 February 2015 Brenda Vincent
Tuesday 3 March 2015 Councillor Clive Rickhards
Tuesday 14 April 2015 Councillor Jenny St.John
Tuesday 5 May 2015 Councillor Dave Shilton.

The future meeting dates set out in the agenda were agreed.

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Chair

The meeting closed at 12.20 pm