

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 5 April 2018

Present:

Councillors:

Jeff Morgan (Chair), Jerry Roodhouse and Chris Williams

Officers:

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader - Children's Participation
John Coleman, Interim Head of Service – Children and Families
Ben Patel-Sadler, Democratic Services Officer
Sharon Shaw, Service Manager, Corporate Parenting

Other attendees:

David Lawrence, Local Democracy Reporter
Melissa Phillips, Children's Participation Apprentice
Councillor Chris Saint, Leader – Stratford-on-Avon District Council

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillors Caroline Phillips and Pam Williams.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2018

John Coleman, Interim Head of Service – Children and Families informed the Panel that it had been established since the previous meeting that the Local Government Association (LGA) was undertaking work to determine what data could potentially be produced and used to identify any potential CSE hotspots. John Coleman would provide feedback to the Panel in terms of the outcomes of this work (via any outcomes arising from the regional CSE group of which Warwickshire was part). This update was provided in relation to page four of the minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

None

2. Update on Children in Care Council (CiCC)

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader - Children's Participation provided a verbal update to the Panel in relation to the practical activity that had been undertaken by the CiCC since the previous meeting.

The Panel noted that:

- Members of the CiCC had participated in the process of interviewing candidates for the position of a careers adviser.
- Members of the CiCC had participated in the process of interviewing for the position of Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) (x2 posts).
- A designated young person sat as part of the Tiffin Club.
- The CiCC was actively involved in the commissioning process (specifically advocacy and independent accommodation visits).
- Melissa Phillips (present at this meeting) had been appointed as an apprentice. Melissa had been in the care system and had a great deal to offer in terms of relaying her experiences to officers.
- Work was continuing in relation to the House Project (a piece of work to determine what housing options could be provided for young people leaving care), specifically, how these properties could be bought. The Panel noted that the hub out of which this work would be delivered had been leased and that young people would be involved in assisting with the interview process for staff positions within the House Project.
- Young people had been advising the Council's communications team in relation to the content and style of new fostering advertisements.
- Members had been invited to attend the 2018 CiCC election announcements which would be taking place on 17th May.
- In relation to the previous meeting of the CiCC, members noted that young people had expressed a view that the presence of a consistent person in their lives was extremely important. Young people had also expressed a view that quality of foster placements was key – young people wanted carers to stick with their foster children to provide them with ongoing stability. Young people had expressed a view that they would like to know more about their rights – some young people had expressed a view that they were 'sheltered' by their foster carers. These young people wanted to be responsible for more practical matters at an earlier age (cooking, cleaning, understanding bills, etc). Some young people felt that training should be provided to foster carers so that these practical matters could be taught by them, to their foster children, at an earlier age. Some young people had expressed a view that they would welcome access to their own personal files and to be able to choose how their information was shared (and with whom).

- John Coleman informed the Panel that he had asked young people directly how they thought about having one designated person allocated directly to them (not a social worker). The idea behind this was to provide young people with someone who they could share any concerns with immediately. Further work would need to be completed to determine if this was feasible and how it would operate in practice.
- The Panel expressed a view that in relation to the issue of preparing young people for leaving care and ultimately for adult life, this responsibility rested with the foster parents. Members noted the Council was always on hand to provide assistance to foster parents and carers and also to young people as they left care. The Panel expressed a view that there was an ongoing debate in relation to whether or not foster care was a vocation or a profession – members agreed that an element of both existed in terms of the role of a foster parent/carer.
- John Coleman informed the Panel that all relationships between every young person in care and others (their foster carers, social workers and other adults) was key to their ongoing development and happiness.
- John Coleman agreed to circulate a link to the independent review of foster care conducted by Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers.

Resolved

The Panel noted the verbal update in relation to the CiCC.

3. Local Offer

Sharon Shaw, Service Manager, Corporate Parenting provided the Panel with a presentation in relation to Warwickshire's Local Offer.

The Panel noted that the main change to the Local Offer in Warwickshire was that local authority support provided to care leavers would be extended to cover young people up to the age of 25.

Sharon Shaw outlined the current support that was offered to care leavers by the Council.

As well as the current support offered to care leavers by the Council, the Panel noted that the following were aspirational offers which the authority was hoping to be able to deliver in the future:

- Leisure passes to be provided for all care leavers up to the age of 21.
- Designated mentors/peer mentors to be provided to young people.
- Ring-fenced apprenticeships within the local authority to be made available to care leavers (5 placements initially). Apprentices to be paid

the National Minimum Wage if working for Warwickshire (or a bursary).

- Additional support to be provided to Warwickshire apprentices (including during the induction programme) and further 1:1 support where required.
- Support to be provided for planning and budgeting for covering the cost of driving lessons and test.
- Care leavers to be exempt from Council Tax until the age of 25.
- Equitable financial support for unaccompanied asylum seeking and section 20 children.
- Accredited independent living skills training to be provided to care leavers.

Sharon Shaw informed the Panel that these aspirational offers would hopefully begin to be delivered within six to nine months.

The Panel noted that it was crucial for carers to be made aware of what funding/offers were available to them and how they could access them.

Members noted that providing the above services would result in financial implications for the authority. However, Sharon Shaw and John Coleman assured the Panel that the costs of providing these services could be met within existing budgets.

Resolved

The Panel noted the contents of the presentation and agreed that:

- 1.) Letters would be sent to the relevant Portfolio Holders at each District and Borough Council to invite them to attend future meetings of the Panel and;
- 2.) Further information would be provided to the Panel in respect of the exact numbers of children scheduled to leave care in the near future.

4. Warwickshire Virtual School Annual Report

The Panel agreed that this item would be deferred to be considered at a future meeting.

5. Child Social Care Activity Data Set

Sharon Shaw, Service Manager, Corporate Parenting spoke to the dataset document which had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

Members noted that there had been an increase in children in need cases since January 2018, although this was now plateauing. The Panel noted that work was being undertaken to understand why this increase had occurred.

The Panel noted that although the number of children subject to a CP plan had increased, the north of the county had seen a decrease.

Members noted that the number of children being admitted into care was decreasing, although there were an increasing number of children remaining in care for longer. Sharon Shaw informed the Panel that officers were working to ensure that permanent arrangements were made at an earlier stage. Members noted that there were around 60 children who had a care order and were placed with parents/grandparents or other family members.

In relation to the average caseloads of social workers, members noted that 26 social workers had been appointed and were awaiting a start date. As soon as these social workers began their employment it was expected that the average caseload per social worker would fall below the OOP 2020 target of 15.

The Panel noted that although there was a forecasted overspend in relation to children looked after, the People Group as a whole would be able to absorb this within its predetermined budget. Members noted that the authority had spent £1 million less on foster placement agency fees over the previous year.

Resolved

The Panel noted the contents of the dataset.

6. Development of Work Programme for 2018-19

Led by the Char, Councillor Jeff Morgan, discussions between members and officers took place around what business the Panel had previously considered and what items the Panel wanted to consider at future meetings.

The following decisions were taken by the Panel in relation to the future work programme:

- The terms of reference for the Panel would be considered and amended to reflect what statutory requirements would be fulfilled going forwards. To facilitate this, informal meetings would be arranged between the Chair and members of the Panel so that the terms of reference were amended and agreed unanimously.
- The meeting scheduled to take place on 1st May would be cancelled. The first meeting of the 2018-19 municipal year would take place in June 2018 (exact date tbc).
- Meetings of the Panel would no longer coincide with meetings of the CiCC. Meetings would be predominantly agenda based and would take place during the morning – future meeting dates were yet to be confirmed but would follow the same frequency as in previous years. If members wished to dedicate meetings to meeting with frontline employees then these would be arranged on an ad-hoc basis as and when deemed

appropriate.

Resolved

The Panel considered the contents of the discussion paper and would shape the future Work Programme via informal meetings to take place during May 2018.

7. Any other Business

None

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel had not yet been scheduled but would take place in June 2018.

The meeting closed at 11.55 am

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Chair