

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 17 September 2018

Present:

Councillors:

Jeff Morgan (Chair) and Caroline Phillips

Officers:

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader - Children's Participation
John Coleman, Interim Head of Service – Children and Families
Shirley Round, Interim Democratic Services Officer
Deena Moorey, Virtual School Head
Sharon Shaw, Service Manager, Corporate Parenting

Other attendees:

Jackie Channell, Strategic Lead (Looked After Group, NHS)
Rachel Webster, (South Warwickshire Health Trust)
Melissa Phillips, Children's Participation Apprentice
Umar Teerab, Children's Participation Apprentice
Lewis Parnell, Apprenticeship Leaving Care

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillors Jerry Roodhouse, Chris Williams, Pam Williams and Yousef Dahmash. Apologies were also received from Nigel Minns, Lisa Barker and Chris Malone.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

The Chair made reference to Item 5 (page 6) of the minutes, raising concerns in regard to 17% of look after children having changes of their social worker. It was discussed and agreed that the issue would be reviewed by the Panel in three to six months to monitor for improved stability.

2. Items included on the Forward Plan

The Panel received a report advising it of an item on the Forward Plan for consideration, by the Deputy Leader, requesting permission to commission a pilot project which aimed to deliver specialist foster care placements.

Resolved

The Panel noted the item on the Forward Plan and agreed for a draft report to be circulated to the Panel members for information.

3. Performance Data

The Panel received a summary report detailing the performance in relation to Looked after Children (LAC) up to July 2018.

The Panel noted that one child had been classed as gender unknown and queried why this would be. It was explained that it was possibly an administration error but that a full explanation would be provided to the next meeting.

The Panel stated that the number of children per placement type did not add up to the total number of LAC identified. The Officer explained that this did not include the children who were residing at home or those in supported accommodation. In general, it was stated that the number of LAC had reduced by one since the last report but that the trend was continuing to rise. This had in part been due to two large families requiring a large number of places, six and nine respectively. The result had been a skewing of the figures in June.

Concern was raised regarding the number (31) of LAC going 'missing' or 'away from placement without authorisation'. The Panel were advised that there were numerous reasons for this which may include, young people staying out with friends through the summer, arriving back after their authorised time, trust issues particularly with unaccompanied asylum seeker children.

With regard to the unaccompanied children that come into the Council's care, are Officers confident that we are fully aware of their needs. It is an area that work is being done, providing supported accommodation, social events, football club and help groups to provide a range of support.

Resolved

The Panel noted the report and would continue to monitor all aspects of Looked after Children's performance data on a regular basis.

4. Update on Children in Care Council (CiCC)

Melissa Phillips represented the Children in Care Council and provided the Panel with an extensive update on the activities that the CiCC had been involved with recently. The update included the following items:-

- Care Leavers Forum – Young People choose agenda items to raise with various service providers, includes information on rights and entitlements.
- Virtual School Awards – took place on 16/9/18 and was well attended.
- Celebrating Fostering Conference – CiCC is to provide 3 workshops for foster parents on how to make LAC experience better. The members will be advised of the date in January 2019 when confirmed.
- North Care Leaver's Drop in Centre – Myton Centre opened in July 2018 and another is to open in Portland House, Nuneaton at beginning of 2019. The centres will provide a safe, social environment for care leavers where they will also be able to access information and services.
- Review of Local Offer – CiCC representatives to meet with County Council Officers at a Senior Leadership Team meeting to share information and discuss the Local Offer. Jackie Channell extended an invitation to CiCC to attend a meeting with GPs, also to have input to the joint strategic meetings held.
- Training – CiCC members were being provided with various forms of training to assist them in their role.
- Care Leavers Survey – annual survey to identify areas for improvement and tailor information to Care Leavers needs eg: Rights and Entitlements Booklets for Over 16s and Under 16s.

Umar Teerab provided the Panel with information about a football team that he had set up with the asylum seekers and LAC to provide social engagement, increase trust and encourage positive support for each other. It was intended that the team would join a local Coventry Football League and they were currently raising funds to support the group. Money in the form of grants was also being pursued through Sport England and other funding bodies.

Resolved:

The Corporate Parenting Panel thanked the Children's Participation Apprentices representing CiCC for their attendance and noted their enthusiastic report.

5. Education Attainment

The Panel were advised that there had been a change in the way that GCSEs had been graded. Instead of grades A-C being a pass it was now numerical with grades 4 & 5 being a pass mark with 4 a lower pass and 5 being better. This change had resulted in a reduction last year in the number of people obtaining a GCSE pass. On average it was 7% of LAC nationally with Warwickshire attaining 7.4%.

There had been a reduction in the number of NEETS, from 25 to 15, and this had been as a result of a project with North Warwickshire & Hinckley College in Nuneaton, to provide practical courses over the summer to give young people qualifications that would lead to work e.g.: fork lift truck driving, barber. Similar courses were to be provided by Rugby College.

The Panel were also pleased to hear that 2 young people had gone on to achieve degrees and work as a result.

Resolved

The Panel noted the report and agreed that it should remain on the work programme as a standing item to monitor the performance going forward. The Panel also requested a further report to come to the November meeting when further data would be available, including details of the local offer that is made to students.

6. Annual Health Report for Looked After Children

The Panel were presented with an Annual Report which set out the operational activity and progress for safeguarding and meeting the health needs of LAC and provided an update on the health services overseen by Warwickshire LAC service for the financial year 2017/18. The report had been presented to the Clinical Governance Committee and would be fed into the Council's strategic health data.

The number of LAC placed by Warwickshire had risen by 2.7% compared to the previous year. There had been a fall of 14.4% in the number of asylum seekers in the same time period.

Each child is provided with an initial health assessment (IHA) within two to three weeks of coming into care. The number of IHAs carried out had risen by 35.6% and illustrated the number of children coming into care for short period of time. The number of leaving care health assessments had also risen, impacting on the workload of the paediatricians involved. Health Assessments were also required for non-looked after children at adoption and with the good working relationship with the social care adoption team this was performing well. The number of adoption assessments had fallen compared to last year but this was unlikely to continue. Some concerns were raised that the parents and social workers rarely attended health assessments and it was agreed that this would be raised with social workers by the Head of Services – Children and Families.

The main area for concern was the number of children with complex needs, drug and alcohol misuse, domestic violence issues. Whilst the average score, for the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires for Warwickshire, remained stable at 13 and below the national average threshold of 14, the service could always be improved. There was currently good commissioning of services dealing with LACs at an emotional level and this had made improvements. There were still some concerns with CAMHS providing continuous service to LACs as they moved through the system, but they were being prioritised.

Emotional wellbeing was fundamental to health and some children need more assistance and support. An officer group was looking at addressing this with those LAC that had the highest scores, to prioritise those in most need. Public Health had also prioritised some monies for children leaving care projects.

A good result for LAC immunisation was expected with approximately 85% of children being immunised this year.

Resolved:

The Panel noted the report and thanked Rachel Webster from the South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust for her attendance.

7. Development of Work Programme for 2018-19

The Panel noted the Work Programme for 2018-19 with the following amendments

- The item on the Virtual School Governing Body would go forward to the November meeting and should include the performance report
- Permanency Plans for Children would be ready for November meeting
- Mental Health & Wellbeing for LAC – Report from RISE to be requested for November meeting
- The Placement Strategy would be ready for the November meeting
- Housing & Homelessness to be removed from November meeting awaiting a joint housing protocol to be completed
- Criminal Prosecutions for LAC and care leavers would be moved to January 2019

8. Good News Stories

None- as contained within Item 4.

9. Any other Business

The Panel enquired of CiCC whether there was any assistance that it required from them and other Councillors at this stage, in regard to the Virtual Awards events going forward. The Panel were advised that the young people involved had requested previously that not too many dignitaries attend the event so the number had been reduced. However, the involvement of relevant partners could be considered and discussed further with the young people.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel has been scheduled for 19 November 2018 at 10.00am in Committee Room 1, Shire Hall, Warwick.

The meeting closed at 11.45 am

.....
Chair