

## **NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

#### **MINUTES**

of meeting held on **19 NOVEMBER 2012** at

Loxley House from 2.30 pm to 4.05 pm

- ✓ Councillor Mellen (Chair) (minute 22-26 inclusive)
- ✓ Councillor Klein (Vice-Chair)
- ✓ Councillor Campbell
- Councillor Culley
- ✓ Councillor Dewinton
- ✓ Councillor Jenkins
- Councillor McCulloch
- ✓ Councillor Morley
- ✓ Councillor Morris

✓ indicates present at meeting

#### **Also in attendance**

- Miss Heidi Watson - Business in the Community
- Miss Sharon Donnelly - Barnardos

#### **Nottingham City Council**

- Miss Elise Darragh - Analysis and Insight )
- Ms Paulette Thompson- ) Children in Care ) Children & Families
- Omenka ) )
- Mr Kwesi Williams ) )
- Miss Sharon Clarke - Children's Residential )
- Miss Sonia Caine - Children's Social Care )
- Mrs Lorna Beedham - Inclusive Learning )
  
- Mrs Evonne Rogers - Business Strategy & Support ) Resources
- Ms Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Democratic Services )

#### **22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Culley and Ms Sharon Thompson, Designated Nurse, Children in Care. The Chair apologised that he would have to leave the meeting early. As Vice-Chair, Councillor Klein was to Chair the remainder of the meeting.

#### **23 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Although a declaration of interest was not made at this point of the meeting, in regard to minute 26 (agenda item 5) Accommodation for Care Leavers, Councillor Dewinton made

the Committee aware that she was a volunteer for 'Stonham' which was a supported lodging scheme for vulnerable people, including young asylum seekers. This was not considered to be of such a significant nature as to require her to leave the room during consideration of the item.

## **24 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED that, the minutes of the last meeting held on 17 September 2012, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Chair.**

## **25 PATHWAY PLANNING**

### **(a) Report of Director of Children's Safeguarding**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Children's Safeguarding, copies of which had been circulated. The report informed the Committee of the legal requirements placed on the Local Authority under 'The Children Act 1989, Vol 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers', which replaced the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

From the age of fifteen, young people in care were allocated a personal advisor from the 'Fifteen Plus' dedicated social work team, to support them with practical skills, finances, housing, health, education, training and employment, through the transition to adulthood. Derived from the young person's care plan, the support was in the form of establishing a pathway plan which identified the actions to be taken by the Local Authority, the young person, their parents/carer, and the full range of agencies involved to enable the young person to achieve their aspirations and make a successful transition to adulthood.

Pathway planning was required for all young people in care, with specific requirements for the following;

- young people with disabilities;
- those who were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children;
- those in the youth justice system (with additional requirements as of December 2012 under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012).

Care Leavers were entitled to the support of their named Personal Advisor up to the age of twenty-one, or, twenty-five if the young person was in fulltime education.

It was noted that 97.2% of Care Leavers in Nottingham City who were eligible for Personal Advisors had a named advisor allocated to them.

It was noted that Pathway Planning was particularly complex for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people as plans were to be compiled to cover the possibility of:

- staying in the UK;
- refused permission to stay in the UK;
- choosing to return to their country of origin.

Local Authorities were now responsible for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people who were aged 18 years or older and in appeal. This statutory duty included the allocation of a Personal Advisor, accommodation, financial support, and Pathway Plans.

**(b) Presentation by the Children in Care Service Manager**

Consideration was given to the presentation by the Children in Care Service Manager, Sharon Clarke, copies of which had been circulated, outlining the legal framework, 'The Children Act 1989, Vol 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers', pathway plan and its preparation, current identified risks, and performance.

The percentage of eligible young people with completed pathway plans was 89.9%, not 94.2% as stated in the report.

The Board's comments were responded to as follows:

- 'looked after children' were eligible for Pathway Plans but 'children in need' who were the subject of residency orders or were living at home with their parents, were not;
- there was to be a funding reduction from the Home Office, in that the Local Authority was to fund care leavers entering full time education. However, for the Local Authority to qualify for the funding which had previously been received there would need to be 25 such care leavers in full time education at any one time. This was unlikely to happen;
- clarity was required in regard to applications from care leavers aged below 25 years, who wanted to enter full time education and at whether the Local Authority would continue to be responsible for the cost of the course and other associated expenses, such as accommodation, for the duration of the course, or only until the young person reached the age of 25 years old. Depending on clarification of this point, some young people may be affected if the Local Authority funding the course did not consider it to be a sustainable position to the completion of the course once the young person was considered independent. While the Authority sought to ensure that the young people in its care received the same opportunities as other young people, it was vital to the benefit of all children and young people in care, that such opportunities should be sustainable and realistically achievable;
- the 15+ team had worked very hard with a co-ordinated approach to ensure that 89.9% of young people had a Pathway Plan in place;
- any child or young person convicted/sentenced/imprisoned were to be the responsibility of the Local Authority from December 2012. It was not yet clear as to the exact number of young people that this was to apply to;
- the Act allowed very little lead-in time in preparation for the adjustments and there were still issues which required further clarity, including the consideration of 'in care';
- on issues where clarity was not provided, case law was required to determine boundaries.

The Chair expressed concern that while the Local Authority had been allocated substantially more statutory duties, the level of funding from Central Government had, in effect, been reduced.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) that the Board continue to offer commitment and acknowledge the importance of Pathway Planning for young people to improve outcomes for young people transitioning into adulthood;**
- (2) that the Board recognise the barriers encountered in the Pathway Planning for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.**

## **26 ACCOMODATION FOR CARE LEAVERS**

At this point of the meeting, Councillor Dewinton realised that she may have an interest to declare regarding the item in so far as she was a volunteer for Stonham. This was not considered to be of such a significant nature as to require her to leave the room during consideration of the item.

### **(a) Report of the Director of Children's Safeguarding**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Children's Safeguarding, copies of which had been circulated. The report informed the Committee of the statutory requirements and guidance available in regard to providing sufficient accommodation for care leavers and young homeless people, and the work of the 15+ Team in providing that service.

The report acknowledged a range of issues which were of concern to young people as they were leaving care. In an effort to address some of these issues and ensure the transition to adulthood was as smooth as possible for the young people, a variety of accommodation was available from a range of social housing partners following a tendered framework. To ease the transition from care to independent living, shared or semi-independent accommodation was often considered as the initial step but provision depended on the needs of the individual young person and be supported by an Individual Placement Plan.

Currently, as young people neared the age of 18 years, it was expected that they would become a tenant in their own right. As previously considered at the last meeting, Nottingham City Homes had a robust support scheme for care leavers as they entered into independent tenancies. This included a substantial starter package of laid carpets, and some electrical equipment in addition to support and advice in sustaining their tenancies, and managing their money. However, it was recognised that some elements of the current provision may change due to welfare reforms which were to be implemented next year. Further information on the impact of welfare reform on care leavers, was to be provided at the next meeting.

It was noted that 95.24% of care leavers were considered to have been placed in sufficient accommodation. Young people serving custodial sentences were not included in the statistics as this was not considered as suitable accommodation.

### **(b) Presentation by the Children in Care Service Manager**

Consideration was given to the presentation by the Children in Care Service Manager, Sharon Clarke, copies of which had been circulated, outlining the Semi-Independence Accommodation Framework.

The Board's questions were responded to as follows:

- ideally for young people living with foster carers, when they reached the age of 18, they would not be expected to move out directly into independent living, but, depending on the individual's needs, may be offered semi-independent accommodation. However, whether such young people were allowed to remain living with the foster cares, was a decision for the foster carers;
- in preparation for the welfare reforms which would not automatically provide housing benefit for young people to live in self contained accommodation, there were proposals to liaise with Nottingham City Homes (NCH) in regard to providing some shared accommodation. There were to be different welfare rules applied to young people leaving care and this was to be discussed at the next meeting;
- where care leavers had signed a tenancy agreement with NCH, if their circumstances changed, such as a partner moving into the property, then there would be a re-assessment as NCH would not take responsibility for the partner but may consider a joint tenancy;
- occasionally private and social landlords other than NCH provided independent accommodation, but other landlords did not tend to offer care leavers the same extensive package worth approximately £1,000, that was provided by NCH.

Heidi Watson, Business in the Community, informed the Board that Nottingham City Housing Association, in partnership with Nottingham City Homes, had won the Big Lottery 'Improving Financial Confidence' bid. This project was geared towards helping young social housing tenants, some of whom were likely to be care leavers.

It was requested that further information be provided to the Board on how effective the different options of accommodation were in regards to sustainability, by examining the outcomes one year into the tenancy.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) that the Board continue to offer commitment to ensuring, as Corporate Parents, that Care Leavers receive sufficient and appropriate Housing in Nottingham City;**
- (2) that the Board commit to the Care Leavers Protocol implementation as partnership between Nottingham City Homes and Children's Services;**
- (3) that, Paulette Thompson-Omenka arrange that a report detailing the sustainability of different types of accommodation for care leavers at one year after their tenancies started, be submitted to a future meeting of the Board;**
- (4) that issues relating to welfare reform and the potential impact on Care Leavers, be considered at the next meeting of the Board.**

**27 BARNARDOS ADVOCACY AND INDEPENDENT VISITOR (IV) SERVICE - NOTTINGHAM RESIDENTIAL VISITING**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Children's Safeguarding, copies of which had been circulated. Miss Sharon Donnelly, Team Leader, presented the report which updated the Board on the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service provided by Barnardo's.

As of 1 May 2011, the contract to provide the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service to children and young people in care in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, had been transferred to Barnardo's and had been extended to March 2013.

The main aim of the advocacy service was to enable the young people to have their wishes and views heard at a time when they were vulnerable.

When requested by the child or young person, either directly or via their social worker, the service provided an advocate/independent visitor (all vetted and trained volunteers) to visit on a monthly basis. This service was available to all of the City and County's children and young people in care, wherever they may be resident country-wide.

As the service continued to be promoted, the number of requests was growing. Between 1 May 2011 and 31 March 2012, there had been 48 new referrals to the advocacy service, and 20 referrals for the visitor service within the City. Since then there had been a further 33 requests for the advocacy service.

There had been some recent changes in staffing and there were now 34 sessional staff operating with a further 4 waiting for final authorisation. For each request the Independent Visitor Co-ordinator matched visitors to the child or young person.

It was believed that as a result of the service, the proportion of children taking part in their Looked After Children (LAC) reviews had increased from 86% in 2011/12 to 94%.

The Board noted that Barnardo's had contributed £20,000 to the service to develop a more specialised advocacy service for children and young people who were at risk of sexual exploitation, an issue particularly relevant for looked after children.

Questions from the Board were responded to as follows:

- the number of visitors that the Co-ordinator should be expected to match, monitor and take responsibility for, had been carefully considered and set at 40. It was predicted that this number would be reached during December so consideration was to be given to as to what steps should then be taken;
- children in the most need were allocated a visitor/advocate as a priority;
- training of volunteers consisted of 2 full days, covering a range of issues, including Health and Safety expectations, safeguarding, boundaries, feedback, case scenarios. It has become apparent in a few instances that that a volunteer was not right for the role or that the role was not what the volunteer had expected;
- once successfully trained, volunteers were constantly monitored to ensure that the standard of service was maintained to the same level as the contracted staff.

Councillors welcomed the focus on preventing sexual exploitation and applauded the progress made to date in providing the services.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) that the Board continue to acknowledge the importance of advocacy and Independent Visitor Service Provided by Barnardo's since May 2011 until the end of March 2013;**
- (2) that both Barnardo's and Nottingham City Social Care continue to promote the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service to all looked after children and young people to ensure that everyone has equal knowledge and access to the service;**
- (3) that Barnardo's work with the Commissioners to continue to evaluate the most effective way of delivering advocacy to children and young people looked after by Nottingham City;**
- (4) that the thanks of the Committee, to Miss Donnelly, for her attendance and contribution to the meeting, be recorded.**

## **28 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE**

Consideration was given to an updated report of the Director of Quality and Commissioning, copies of which were placed around the table and **submitted to the online Agenda following the meeting.**

The report informed the Committee that some bench marking data would not be available until 29 November so the Care information should be considered provisional.

It was noted that:

- o there were currently 549 children and young people in the care of Nottingham City Council. This was a reduction from the last meeting when the total was 560;
- o in regard to National Indicator (NI) 148, Care Leavers in Employment, Education or Training, there had been a significant drop, from 77.8 % in quarter 1, to 54.4 % in quarter 2. Part of the contributing factors to this drop was that during the summer holidays in that the information regarding what young people were doing may not have been updated, young people had finished at school but not formally enrolled in training or education which was to start in September, or the young people had not decided what to do next.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) that, the performance information provided in the report be noted;**
- (2) that, in relation to NI 148, a breakdown be circulated with the minutes, detailing the specific numbers of Care Leavers in each of the following groups: Employment, Education and Training.**