

## NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

### **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Loxley House on 23 SEPTEMBER 2013 from 3.00 pm to 4.11 pm**

- ✓ Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
  - Councillor Ginny Klein (Vice-Chair)
  - Councillor Georgina Culley
  - Councillor Emma Dewinton
  - ✓ Councillor Glyn Jenkins
  - ✓ Councillor Carole McCulloch
  - Councillor Eileen Morley
  - ✓ Councillor Jackie Morris (minutes 22 to 24 inclusive)
  - ✓ Councillor Wendy Smith
- ✓ indicates present at meeting

#### **Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

Councillor Rosemary Healy	- Observing	
Gill Moy	- Nottingham City Homes	
Bev Beatie	) Foster Carers	
Tanya Mackley	)	
Lewis Fearon	- Children in Care Council Rep	
Jon Dudley	- Fostering & Adoption	)
Paulette Thompson-Omenka	- Head of Children in Care	)
Kelly Connolly	- Schools Access & Improvement	) Children and
Helen Blackman	- Safeguarding	) Families
Emma Pearce	- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)	)
Alan Monaghan	) 15 Plus Team	)
Lynn Pearce	)	)
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Constitutional Services	- Resources

#### **19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Georgina Culley  
Councillor Emma Dewinton  
Councillor Jenkins (on other Council business)  
Candida Brudenell  
Evonne Rogers  
Heidi Watson

#### **20 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Although not required to do so, Councillor Mellen informed the Committee that, with regard to agenda item 4, (minute 24) he had a close friend who was part of the Fostering Network, and so while remaining in the room, he would not comment during this item.

## **21 MINUTES**

The Board confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2013, as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

## **22 IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES WITHIN CAMHS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CARE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY - NOTTINGHAM CITY**

Emma Pearce, Team Manager for Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Children Looked After Team, presented the item by explaining the role of her team.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) the team, based at Thorneywood, had considered how the service could be improved for Children in Care, both those living in the City and those placed outside;
- (b) currently, once the child's social worker had requested the support of the service, an initial approach would be made to the young person and, where necessary, the foster carer;
- (c) once contact is made, then the involvement of the team lasts as long as it is needed;
- (d) the team continue to provide regular consultations to internal staff at residential homes on how best to support young people with their emotional and mental health needs;
- (e) group sessions on improving skills with young people, held over 6 weeks are also available to home staff. Staff had fed back that the course was proving very useful so it was suggested that it be rolled out to foster carers too;
- (f) members of the Team have continued to take part in a variety of panels and meetings involving young people to ensure that the profile of mental health remained prominent. These include:
  - (i) Placement Panel
  - (ii) Profiling Tool Panel;
  - (iii) Edge of Care Panel;
  - (iv) Children in Care Working Group;
  - (v) Children in Care Outcomes Group;
  - (vi) National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Steering Group;
  - (vii) NCSB Audits;
  - (viii) Network Meetings - Police/ Youth Offending Team;
- (g) The intention is to re-examine the remit of the team and potentially increase its size by October 2013. It is proposed that a pathway be devised to include:
  - (i) For children and young people placed outside Nottinghamshire, the recruitment of two CAMHS practitioners to specifically liaise with CAMHS in the area in which the child lives and to clinically monitor these children;

- (ii) All Nottingham City Children placed out of the area to receive an initial assessment to ensure that the right therapeutic and mental health services are provided locally and in a timely manner;
  - (iii) That six monthly Strengths, and Difficulties Questionnaires scores are undertaken as part of the Health Assessment Review and within the LAC review statutory process;
  - (iv) Links closely with the placements service ensuring that CAMHS are informed of placement moves and can forward information to ensure that effective monitoring can take place, such as incorporating references in the Strengths and Difficulties surveys;
  - (v) Support the network in relation to CAMHS and external providers' quality assurance.
- (h) It is proposed that a pre and post adoption support services will be expanded to ensure that emotional needs are met. This may potentially include offering training to prospective adoptive parents. It's currently not certain how this will be structured as clarity was required from the Clinical Commissioning Board as to what their requirements are;
- (i) Where other Local Authorities have children placed in Nottingham, Fostering and Adoption had offered to sell their services. Where the offer has been accepted, it has generated a small income which has been re-invested into the service;
- (j) The waiting list for adoptions is relatively short but the team are currently working to capacity. With additional team members the waiting time can be reduced much more quickly.

The following information was prompted by the Board's questions:

- (k) Young people do have a say in their consultations, initially through their social workers, then with the team. Each case is treated individually and ideally, all reports are shared with the young person;
- (l) 204 children in care have been allocated to the team and are receiving ongoing consultations. Approximately 1 in 5 looked after children have mental health issues;
- (m) Schools are included in the network partnership;
- (n) The youngest children involved so far have been 5 years of age. Although all cases are considered on an individual basis, in cases where the children are this young, the team will work directly with their carer;
- (o) Where children are placed outside Nottinghamshire, an arrangement with that Local Authority is made for them to provide the required services. Their service is monitored by the team who also liaise with the commissioners;

- (p) The pilot scheme of a 'tariff model and traded services' had generated £8,000. The scheme had proved perfect with regard to the more specialist needs of the young person. Currently there are 47 of Nottingham's young people resident outside of Nottingham, some only a few miles away, depending on where carers are available;
- (q) Once a referral has been made, usually by the GP or social worker, an initial assessment generally takes place within a week. During that assessment, the date of the next meeting/session is scheduled, usually for between 4 and 6 weeks time. Each session lasts approximately half a day and depending on the need of the child, can take place weekly or fortnightly with reviews every 6 months or 12 sessions;
- (r) If a child receiving the services of CAMHS is moved to the area of another Local Authority, the team endeavour to ensure that the local CAMHS is made aware and Nottingham CAMHS will continue to provide services until a full hand over can be completed;
- (s) Carers generally found the service to be fantastic but, where a young person was desperate, the wait of 4-8 weeks can seem very long for the carer and the child;
- (t) It would be helpful if carers could make referrals and not have to wait for the social workers or GPs. This would improve the speed of the process.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

## **23 COMMISSIONED SERVICES AND THE REFORM AGENDA IN THE FOSTERING AND ADOPTION SERVICE**

Jon Dudley, Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption, presented the report which summarised the impact of two current contracts for commissioned work by Social Work Choices and Fostering Network Advice and Mediation Service.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) The Action Plan for Adoption was published by Central Government in March 2012, with revised guidance issued in July 2013, primarily to reduce the time that children wait for adoptive placements and for those adoptions to be completed;
- (b) A 3 year pilot to assess adopters and foster carers was commissioned from Social Work Choices;
- (c) First4Adoption was a "front door" website containing information, advice and details of adoption agencies;
- (d) A two stage process had been developed for adoptions, to reduce the process to 6 months or less, a similar process has also been applied for the process of approving foster carers;
- (e) Nottingham City recruits foster and adoptive carers through in-house advertising, initial information events, training and monthly information meetings;

- (i) Between 1 September 2012 and 31 August 2013, 297 adoption information packs were dispatched, slightly lower than the previous year when 335 were sent out;
  - (ii) The number of enquirers attending adoption information sessions has risen from 130 to 144;
- (f) Assessments are passed to Social Work Choices (SWC), the commissioned partner which then prepares and presents the applications to the Panel for consideration;
- (i) SWC have presented 28 applications to the Panel (all approved), compared to 14 the previous year;
  - (ii) The contract was set initially for three years and is nearing the end of the second year;
- (g) Not all applications result in adoption or fostering for a variety of reasons. Some applicants withdraw for personal reasons but others are declined or deferred by the Panel following medicals, international checks, Criminal Record Bureau checks etc;
- (h) Nottingham City Foster Carers currently provide placements for 218 children and 153 looked after children are currently at some stage of the adoption process;
- (i) To help reduce the delay in the adoption process, grant funding from central government will be used to employ several additional staff:
- (i) A Communities and Marketing Officer;
  - (ii) A Customer Services Officer;
  - (iii) Fast Track Adoption Support Advisors;
  - (iv) Two additional Adoption Support Advisors;
  - (v) A Practice Manager;
  - (vi) An enhancement to Post Order Support;
  - (vii) An Innovation and Change Manager.
- (j) An adoption scorecard is the national method of monitoring the time taken for an adoption to be completed, with the guidance stating that the process should not take more 91 weeks from when the child enters care and when they are placed for adoption, and no more than 30 weeks between the court agreeing a plan for adoption and children being matched to parents;
- (k) During 2012/13, on average, Nottingham City achieved both stages as within 95 weeks and 36 weeks respectively;
- (l) It is a statutory requirement to ensure that carers have access to independent advice so Nottingham City Council provides its foster carers with individual membership of the Fostering Network Advice and Mediation Service:
- (i) The service offers a advice on a range of issues;

- (ii) During 2012/13, this service was accessed by Nottingham City carers 31 times;
- (iii) Some of the issues raised highlighted the need for carers to receive full and complete information on children at the start of each placement, and where allegation are made against carers, for those carers to receive support and to be kept informed of progress;
- (iv) The cost of the contract with the Fostering Network is currently £14,626 per year.

The following responses were given to questions asked and comments made by the Board;

- (m) Before SWC were engaged, the applications and assessments were processed by an in house team but the system was complicated and often confusing to potential carers. As part of the 3 year pilot, the performance of SWC's 'one assessment system' is due to be assessed after the second year, hopefully during December, by which time all the relevant information can be analysed. In addition, carers will be asked for their opinions as part of the assessment of the pilot;
- (n) The assessments undertaken by SWC were still thorough and enabled decisions to be made much earlier in the process. This was in the best interest of the child;
- (o) There was also to be a review of the timeliness of how courts processed adoption issues;
- (p) With the new marketing manager post in place, there were plans to try and encourage partner organisations to display the City Council advertising for fostering and adoption to encourage their employees to come forward. In addition, the City Council Team also planned to attend some community events and festivals to promote fostering and adoption through the City Council;
- (q) Through SWC, currently each fostering assessment cost £2,000 and each adoption assessment £2,200;
- (r) Foster and adoption carers will be asked their opinions on the best places and methods for advertising;
- (s) Central Government promotes fostering with a view to adopting but there are risks to acknowledge in that currently the courts will make the final decision. Carers will need to be prepared to cope with this risk;
- (t) 40 children were adopted last year through the City Council, and since March this year, 10 more have been adopted;
- (u) One of the issues raised as a result of the calls to the Fostering Network was that communication between the City Council and carers needed improving. This would be addressed;

- (v) Carers attending the meeting had contacted the Fostering Network for issues including special insurance required, tax office problems, and a special guardianship query. The service was considered by the carers to be like a union for foster carers.

**RESOLVED**

**(1) to note:**

- (i) the steps being taken locally to address the challenging Adoption Reform agenda and meet our national and local strategic priorities;**
  - (ii) the work undertaken by the commissioned partners to support the City Council's work;**
- (2) to approve the continuation of offering foster carers the benefits of individual membership of the Fostering Network;**
- (3) to review the work commissioned through Social Work Choices at the end of the second year of the contract with particular reference to quality and value.**

**24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED to note that the next meeting is scheduled to be held on 18 November 2013 at 2.30pm in Loxley House.**