

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 1 June 2015 from 2.33pm- 4.12pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Glyn Jenkins
Councillor Sally Longford
Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Wendy Smith

Absent

Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Sue Johnson
Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Marcia Watson
Councillor Sam Webster

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Kay Sutt	- Service Manager for Residential and Targeted Support
Kwesi Williams	- Project Officer, Children in Care
Helen Blackman	- Head of Children's Social Care, Vulnerable Children and Families
Steve Comb	- Head of Children in Care
Clive Chambers	- Head of Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Tracey Nurse	- Child Protection, Head of Children's Social Care
Evonne Rogers	- Head of Business Support
Jeren Artykova	- Children in Care Council member
BB	- Foster Carer Representative
Heather Walker) NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service)
Mary Lewis)
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

Councillor Ginny Klein is appointed Vice Chair for the 2015-16 municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Ginny Klein – Personal
Councillor Sam Webster – Leave
TM - Foster Carer Representative
Heidi Watson – Business in the Community
Paul Clark – NYAS
Elise Ashworth

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4 MINUTES

The minutes are confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

5 SPECIALIST SERVICE UPDATE

The Directors and Heads of Service involved with Children in Care briefly outlined their roles and responsibilities as follows:

Steve Comb - Head of Children in Care

- responsible for the 585 children in care in city currently;
- responsibility for adoption and fostering teams and social work teams for children in care;
- 7 children's homes, which are registered with OFSTED;
- and semi-independent living support properties to help prepare you young people in care for independence;
- the Targeted and Support Teams and Educare Teams.

The service aims for the best possible outcomes for children in care are trying to ensure the best start possible. The service is currently trying to bring away children in care who are placed outside of the city back inside the city as this will not only require less external foster carers, where appropriate, it will enable young people to retain connections with friends and family and the city.

Last year's 70 children successfully adopted, this is the best result ever for the city and the young people concerned.

Clive Chambers - Head of Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

As lead for the Safeguarding Children Board, Clive has three key areas of responsibility in his service area:

- 1 Ensuring that agencies in the City are working together to achieve the best possible safeguarding outcomes and ensuring effective mechanisms to support and enable this. This work is led by the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board, which has on a range of functions, including serious case reviews. The NCSCB has a scrutiny and challenge role in ensuring safeguarding is as good as it can possibly be;
- 2 Independent Reviewing Officers chair Child Protection Conferences and make decisions about whether should be subject to a protection plan. They also chair Looked After Reviews and have a wider responsibility for ensuring that plans for Children in the care of the the local authority are appropriate, properly implemented and achieved in a timely fashion. Each individual child's plan is examined and considered.
- 3 The shared Social Care Complaints Team which covers both adult and child social care.

Tracey Nurse, Head of Child Protection

The role includes responsibility for:

- the Duty and Screening Services management were referrals come into the city;
- Emergency Duty Services between 8 pm and 8 am for out of hours services for children at risk;
- 12 field work teams of social worker services for children in need, at risk and in care.

Helen Blackman, Director for Children's Social Care

All Heads of Service within the Directorate work together to try to support young people within their own families but if this cannot be achieved, unless inappropriate, the aim is to enable young people and the families to reconnect at a later date.

The achievement of targets for the following year, in each section include:

- more local foster carers within Nottingham City;
- to support and enable safeguarding quality assurance and to build on the work already achieved to enable safeguarding practices or lack of them, to be challenged;
- to continue to provide a safe service and where possible prevent children entering care where it is safe to do so;
- to further strengthen the partnership 'front door' early years work with whole families;
- to improve workforce stability as this will increase the sense of stability for young people in care.

6 REGULATION 44 VISITS

Kay Sutt, Service Manager for Residential and Targeted Support, presented the update on Regulation 44 Visits, which were formally known as Regulation 33 Visits until the change in legislation in April 2014.

Regulation 44 visits have to take place unannounced at least once a month for all children's homes and units run by Local Authorities. The Independent visitor, who is not employed by the home, nor directly responsible for it, inspects the home associated paperwork, speaks with the young people living at the home and writes report which are submitted to the Service Manager for Residential and Targeted Support and OFSTED. If OFSTED feel there are issues of concern, they can approach the service manager and even undertake their own assessment of the home, but this rarely happens.

The purpose of the visits to ensure that all children and young people within the placement being appropriately cared for and that their individually assessed needs are being met in line with their care plans and (England) regulations and standards 2015.

The current OFSTED ratings for the seven Nottingham City Council run registered homes include:

- one as outstanding,
- three as good with outstanding features,
- two as good and
- one is adequate but which is working towards good.

During the past three months visitors have identified the following issues to be addressed;

- i. various documents need to be updated and signed by staff;
- ii. staff require refresher training in food hygiene and first aid;
- iii. all staff need to have internet and computer awareness training;
- iv. and staff need to be more creative in encouraging young people to pursue hobbies and interests.

Nottingham now has a total of four supported semi-independent homes and although some were registered with OFSTED it is not a requirement and the decision has been made to de-register to enable more flexibility and a more suitable environment for young adults seeking independent living. Regulation 44 visits are not required for supported semi-independent homes but independent visitors continue to assess and quality assure these homes.

It was recognised that young people were leaving care early as they were ready to assert their independence and did not want to be treated like a child in a children's home but the regulation of children's homes does not provide appropriate flexibility for them to do this. Young people who leave care early often do not have good experiences and outcomes were often poor. The semi-independent homes enable 16 to 18 year-old children in care to develop skills in preparation for leaving care. Generally young people enter the semi-independent homes at about the age of 17 following a referral. Assessments ensure that semi-independent supported living would be the best option for each individual. Young people then visit the home, often with their carer or guardian, before they decide if they wish to accept the opportunity.

RESOLVED

- (1) to support continued involvement and recruitment of relevant independent professionals undertaking Regulation 44 visits and to welcome members involvement in quality assurance visits of unregulated semi-independent homes for care leavers;**
- (2) for the Corporate Parenting Board to continue to receive regular updates in respect of outcomes of visits;**
- (3) for any Corporate Parenting Board member wishing to have a tour of semi-independent homes, to contact the Service Manager for Residential and Targeted Support.**

7 PERFORMANCE REPORT OCTOBER 2014 - MARCH 2015

Steve Comb, Head of Children in Care, presented the performance report for the last quarter year to the end of March 2015.

The following points were highlighted;

- (a) during the last quarter 575 Nottingham's children were in care, this equates to 90 children per 10,000 population, which is very close to statistical neighbours and as a result of a lot of hard work to, where appropriate, try and keep children living with their family or family members. However there is still room for improvement;

- (b) 70 children were adopted during last year which is a great achievement, and will continue to be built on a with 35 to date being discharged from care as a result of a permanent outcome, such as adoption, a residence order, or a special guardianship order;
- (c) the preparation for independence through semi-independent living is proving valuable for young people leaving care;
- (d) employment challenges continue to be an issue for young people in and leaving care, but is this is receiving attention;
- (e) at the end of April, 3 young people were in custody, two in secure accommodation. The Police are working with the local authority including a jointly funded post, to prevent the criminality of children and young people in care, and to achieve restorative penalties in preference to custody wherever appropriate;
- (f) retaining communication with care leavers continues to be an issue as although these young people have no obligation to maintain contact, the local authority is required to maintain performance indicators regarding suitable accommodation and employment until the age of 25;

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the performance report;**
- (2) for further information to be provided to a future meeting regarding Special Guardianship Orders.**

8 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL UPDATE

Kwesi Williams, Project Officer for Children in Care, presented the report.

In addition to the children in care Council, members are informed of the establishment of a Corporate Children in Care Council (CCiCC) which will operate later in the year. The purpose of this meeting is to facilitate better communication between children in care and senior management on issues affecting children in care through focused, face to face dialogue.

RESOLVED to recognise and support the introduction of the CCiCC meetings and, where possible, endeavour to assist in completing any remedial actions that result from these meetings.

9 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL - 2014 HAVE YOUR SAY SURVEY RESULTS

Kwesi Williams, Project Officer for Children in Care, presented the report which details the purpose and application of the 'have your say survey' 2014. Jeren Artykoa, Children in Care Council (CiCC) member, delivered a PowerPoint presentation of the survey results, for which the CiCC had analysed and produced 'RAG' ratings.

A copy of the presentation is included within the agenda and the following points regarding the Charter Commitments were highlighted during the meeting:

- (a) 'we will give our children and young people enough time to help to understand and be happy with their circumstances' received an amber rating reflecting a 1.8% improvement on the perception of social workers achieving this commitment, and a 1.9% improvement for carers. 78% of young people felt that their carers had enough time for them. This figure could be improved;
- (b) 'we will make sure they know about the advocacy and complaint services in case they want help to have their views heard or unhappy with us' produced a red rating compared to the 2013 amber rating. This was a result of a decrease of numbers of children in care who felt they could talk to social workers, carers, school or the advocacy service, with 8.8 % of young people in 2014 finding it hard to talk to anyone, compared to 7% in 2013;
- (c) 'we will listen to our children and young people and involve them in planning for their care' was downgraded in 2014 from green to amber with nearly 11% of children either not attending or contributing to their LAC (Looked After Children) review in 2014 which is an increase from 8.6% in 2013. Approximately 90% of children felt that their voices were heard in their LAC and pathway plan reviews;
- (d) 'we will keep our children and young people safe and well by seeing that they have the right place to live as quickly as possible' was downgraded to red in 2014 from green in 2013 with a 10% drop in young people who felt that they were living in a place right for them;
- (e) 'we will keep our children and young people safe and well by making sure that this home is stable and keeps them safe' this rating was reduced from a green in 2013 to amber in 2014 as fewer children felt safe in their home, at school, or in their neighbourhood;
- (f) 'we will keep our children and young people safe and well by giving them the right support to be as healthy as possible' retained an amber rating is 88% of young people felt healthy all of the time or often Although this figure is reducing year on year from the 97% achievement in 2011. The CiCC did not rank this response as red as members of the council believed that popular worries including the future, finding jobs, courses and education is to be expected in the current climate (although such concerns are often unfounded);
- (g) 'we will help our children and young people to enjoy themselves' overall achieved a very positive response;
- (h) 'we will help them to achieve at school and elsewhere to the very best of their ability' achieved a green rating against 2013 rating of amber. This was as a result of an 8% increase in the number of young people who feel they're doing very well or well at school. There was also a reduction in the number of young people who did not know about their PEPs (Personal Education Plans);
- (i) 'we know that change of home, carer, social work or school can easily cause problems for a child or young person so we promised to do all we can to prevent

such changes unless they are absolutely necessary to keep the child or young person safe and well' continues to be awarded a red rating with only 17.4% of young people feeling stable and without changes, which is a 7% drop from 2013;

- (j) 'we will help them to achieve at school and elsewhere to the best of their ability' achieved a green rating following an 8% increase of children and young people who felt they were doing well or very well at school;
- (k) 'we will make sure that a child or young person stays in touch with their birth family and friends as much as possible, considering their safety and well-being' only half of the respondents were in touch with their families as much as they wanted to be but satisfaction is growing regarding the ability to spend time with old friends;
- (l) 'we will help our children and young people to plan for and achieve successful journey into independent adulthood' achieved a green rating as 86.4% of young people were happy or very happy with the support they were receiving for their future;
- (m) the overall rating the way in which Nottingham city council is taking care of children in care and care leavers is rated as amber.

The following comments were made by the committee:

- (n) it's good to see that our young people in care are doing so well academically and are happy at school;
- (o) a change in social worker causes a huge problem for young people and as far as possible is avoided;
- (p) it's really important that young people are aware and understand that the advocacy service is available to them;
- (q) it's a concern that there are three red rated issues highlighted in the survey on topics which have been raised previously and for which every effort is made to resolve, as of yet, in the view of our children and young people in care, with little progress, but work will continue;
- (r) it is disappointing that so many young people do not feel they are living in the right place for them. The authority is trying to recruit more foster carers from within the city and we are aware that many young people want supported accommodation near to the city;
- (s) Nottingham is not alone in having difficulties retaining social workers, however measures are being taken to recruit and retain more social workers which will provide more stability for young people. This is not a problem solely for Nottingham and other authorities have similar issues.

RESOLVED

- (1) for the findings of the survey and 'RAG' rating assessment results to be used to inform the strategic action plan (which the board endorsed) of the 2014-16**

Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy, with priority given to areas highlighted as red;

- (2) to note that the Board recognises the hard work done by the Children in Care Council in the planning, delivery and analysis of the have your say survey, and acknowledges their vital role in the co-production of services across children's social care.**