

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 23 May 2016
from 14.30 - 15.56**

Membership

Present

Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Jim Armstrong
Councillor Glyn Jenkins
Councillor Sally Longford
Councillor Wendy Smith
Councillor Marcia Watson
Councillor Sam Webster

Absent

Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Sue Johnson

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

BB	- Foster Carer Representative
Helen Blackman	- Director of Children's Integrated Services
Sonia Cain	- Service Manager, Children's Social Care
Clive Chambers	- Head of Service, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Steve Comb	- Head of Children in Care
Jon Rea	- Engagement and Participation Officer
Kay Sutt	- Service Manager, Residential and Targeted Support
Phil Wye	- Constitutional Services Officer

1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Ginny Klein as Vice-Chair of the Board for the 2016/17 municipal year

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Sue Johnson – unwell
Councillor Ginny Klein – personal reasons

Gill Moy
TM
Kwesi Williams

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 REGULATION 44 VISITS NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL INTERNAL CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES INCLUDING SHORT BREAKS UNIT.

Kay Sutt, Service Manager, Residential and Targeted Support, introduced the report giving an overview of Regulation 44 visits to children's homes and units run by Nottingham City Council. Kay highlighted the following:

- (a) Regulation 44 of The Children's Home (England) Regulations 2015 requires monthly visits to be completed of all children's homes and units run by a local authority or independent children's home provider by a person not employed at the home or directly responsible for it;
- (b) written records are examined, with particular reference to daily logs, significant events and notifiable incidents including any complaints or compliments received. Written or verbal consent from the child or young person themselves, or parents/carers in the case of a child or young person with complex disabilities where communication is not possible, must be obtained;
- (c) children or young people are interviewed as well as parents, relatives, other professionals and staff as the inspectors feel necessary;
- (d) the independent inspector will write a report after a visit and form an opinion as to whether the children or young people are effectively safeguarded and the conduct of the home promotes children's wellbeing. The report may make recommendations for the registered manager to take in order to improve the general running of the home;
- (e) the inspectors on the Regulation 44 rota are council staff, professionals or volunteers. They are assessed to see that they have the relevant experience, skills and qualifications. Training takes place a few times a year on standards and regulations and who to contact if there is a problem;
- (f) Ofsted use Regulation 44 reports during their own inspections to make sure that action plans have been addressed by the Registered Manager and staff team;
- (g) the reports in Nottingham describe the homes as pleasant, clean, well maintained and nicely decorated with a homely feel. Young people are very complimentary about the care and support they receive, with very few complaints;
- (h) young people's access to education and employment is improving. All of the children and young people are offered relevant education packages and support with getting into work or further education;
- (i) there are now 13 settled beds in 5 children's homes including a 4 bed home for children and young people with complex needs and disabilities, 4 emergency beds and an increase from 16 to 18 semi-independence beds throughout the city. An increase in beds prevents children and young people from having to be settled outside the city.

The following answers were given in response to questions from the Board:

- (j) if a problem or suggested change is noted at one home, this can be shared among the managers of all homes if deemed relevant;
- (k) the private, semi-independent homes must make their own arrangements for Regulation 44 inspections;
- (l) the homes are very regulated with monthly inspections, but they generally enjoy the inspections as they understand that they contribute to improving the service;
- (m) members of the Corporate Parenting Board are encouraged to volunteer for quality assurance visits of unregulated semi-independent homes for care leavers;
- (n) the number of Children in Care that are in the criminal justice system has reduced. This is because police involvement is avoided where possible, with the Youth Offending Team and the Children in Care Police Officer working together. The Children in Care Police Officer has recently been commended for her successful work.

RESOLVED to

- (1) support continued involvement and recruitment of relevant independent professionals undertaking Regulation 44 visits;**
- (2) to involve members in quality assurance visits of unregulated semi-independent homes for care leavers.**

6 ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY

Sonia Cain, Service Manager Fostering and Adoption, introduced the report providing an overview of the child permanency performance of the Local Authority and the number of children placed for adoption and Special Guardianship. Sonia highlighted the following:

- (a) adoption is a legal transfer to transfer all parental rights to a new parent, whereas a Special Guardianship is where the rights are shared. A Special Guardian still makes the majority of decisions regarding a child but cannot make certain decisions such as changing the child's name;
- (b) the government has directed that Local Authorities come together regionally for adoption services, and so by 2020 there will be a regional East Midlands adoption service;
- (c) the authority is currently home finding for 25 children. This can be very complex if there are sibling groups or children with complex needs. However, a recent success story is that a sibling group of 6 children was successfully adopted together;

- (d) the government monitors the timescales for adoption, from when a child is taken into care to when an adoption order is made;
- (e) 11 children's plans for adoption were rescinded. The majority of these have remained with foster carers;
- (f) Recruitment of adopters is going well, with 36 currently being assessed and lots of interest. Potential adopters are given photos and DVDs of the children and some children can have 3 or 4 parents interested in adopting them;
- (g) there has been a national review of Special Guardianship Orders and there is now a clear expectation that the assessment of prospective Special Guardians is thorough and demonstrates the carer's ability to parent the child;

The following points were made during the discussion which followed:

- (h) if a child's plan changes, Nottingham waits longer than many other local authorities to see if a suitable match can be found before rescinding their adoption plan;
- (i) the recent Queen's Speech had wide ranging measures aimed at attracting more adopters and making the adoption process quicker. The full details are not yet evident and there is likely to be a time delay until measures come in;
- (j) when a child's adoption plan is rescinded this is a joint decision between the child and the authority, with analysis of the prospect of finding a family. In Nottingham the aim is to keep siblings together and place older children even when this can be a challenge. This can be at odds with government targets which tend to be for shorter timescales;
- (k) post adoption support is available for adoptive parents, and allowances are paid for some more difficult children. Adopters are also invited to activities and help can be sought for those who are struggling financially;
- (l) regional working on adoption could be a challenge as different local authorities have differing ways of working, for example some tend towards long term fostering for children with additional needs rather than adoption.

RESOLVED to

- (1) note the performance to date in adoption and Special Guardianship and the activities being undertaken to minimise delays;**
- (2) present the Adoption and Permanency report to the Corporate Parenting Board in May in future as this will enable the Adoption Leadership Board data to be considered for the previous year and provide accurate data for the year end to be collated;**
- (3) request a report to a future meeting of the Board on measures from the Queen's Speech when they become more evident.**

7 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Q3 AND Q4 2016/17)

Steve Comb, Head of Children in Care, presented the report providing the Board with the most up to date performance overview in relation to Children in Care and highlighting results from October 2015 to March 2016. Steve highlighted the following:

- (a) the overall number of Children in Care is slightly lower than statistical neighbours. This is partially due to lots of activity around supporting families to safely keep their own children;
- (b) the target for the number of Children in Care who have become adopted or placed under a Special Guardianship Order has been surpassed, however timeliness in completing adoptions remains a challenge, in part due to the complexity of adoption cases;
- (c) the percentage of Children in Care that have had three or more placement moves in 12 months is too high. This is partially due to a larger number of Children in Care and fewer foster carers;
- (d) the number of Children in Care with an up-to-date health assessment has reduced. There have been some problems with administrative capacity to ensure assessments are booked in a timely way.

Board members felt that the target for the number of care leavers in employment, education or training could be increased further, however it may be more prudent to focus on areas where Nottingham is performing worse than statistical neighbours.

RESOLVED to

- (1) note the performance against key indicators;**
- (2) reassess the target for 15/16 on the percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training (17-21 years old).**

8 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

Jon Rea, Engagement and Participation Officer, gave a verbal update, highlighting the following:

- (a) three of the most experienced members of the Children in Care Council have recently left, but some newer members may come to Board meetings in future in their place;
- (b) a recent meeting of the Children in Care Council discussed the importance of networks with trusted adults for Children in Care, so that they leave care with a strong network of adults;
- (c) recruitment to the Council is always a subject at meetings. Two new members will be attending the next session. A new group has also been established for

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younger children, aimed at 8-13 year olds;

(d) the Virtual School Board is looking for a new member, which could be a current member of the Children in Care Council or somebody new;

(e) work is currently been undertaken to see how Children in Care can be better digitally enabled to contact social workers.

RESOLVED to note the update

9 FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED to note the forward plan

10 FUTURE MEETING DATES

AGREED to meet at 2.30pm on the following dates:

18 July 2016

19 September 2016

21 November 2016

23 January 2017

20 March 2017