

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 22 July 2016
from 14.35 - 15.57**

Membership

Present

Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Sally Longford
Councillor Sam Webster

Absent

Councillor Jim Armstrong
Councillor Glyn Jenkins
Councillor Sue Johnson
Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Wendy Smith
Councillor Marcia Watson

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Sonia Cain	- Service Manager – Fostering and Adoption
Clive Chambers	- Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Sharon Clarke	- Service Manager – Children in Care
Steve Comb	- Head of Children in Care
Sarah Fielding	- Director of Education
Dino Labbate	- Registered Manager, Children’s Residential
Gill Moy	- Director of Housing, Nottingham City Homes
Marcel Reid	- Registered Manager, Children’s Residential
Jordan Whatman	- Project Officer, Children in Care
Phil Wye	- Constitutional Services Officer

11 MEMBERSHIP

RESOLVED to note the appointment of Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora as a substitute member of the Corporate Parenting Board

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Jim Armstrong – personal reasons
Councillor Sue Johnson – leave
Councillor Marcia Watson – personal reasons
Councillor Wendy Smith - other council business

Helen Blackman
TM
Valerie Marshall
Jon Rea

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2016 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

15 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

Clive Chambers, Head of Service, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, introduced the report which summarises the work of the Independent Reviewing Service during the course of 2015-2016. Clive highlighted the following:

- (a) the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is to provide external oversight, challenge and scrutiny to local practice in child protection, fostering and children in care;
- (b) there has been a significant increase in the number of children subject to Protection Plans, with the highest category being for emotional abuse. The small number of plans for sexual abuse reflects the position nationally;
- (c) on 31st March 2016 there were 589 children and young people in care of Nottingham City, the majority of whom were placed within 20 miles of Nottingham. There were slightly more boys than girls with the majority being from a white British background;
- (d) there were 156 causes for concern in Q1-Q3 of 2015/16. These included insufficient engagement with children and their families, failing to progress contact arrangements, work not being progressed and completed in a timely way, and care plans not being submitted in advance of meetings. This is a relatively small number of concerns and shows a healthy system;
- (e) contact between children in care and their family is an increasing challenge due to social media and the internet;
- (f) moving forward, the council will maximise the opportunities for children and young people to contribute to plans and meetings about them, support the implementation of a new case recording system and ensure that this meets the needs of the wider service area, work with the Child Sexual Exploitation Coordinator to provide information and intelligence to further strengthen the local response to sexual exploitation, and refine the Causes for Concern process and the Efficacy Framework;
- (g) there have been a number of government documents published recently about children's social care with interesting implications on the council and the IROs. A feature of some of these is a focus on partnership arrangements for delivering services for children.

RESOLVED to note the activity of the Independent Reviewing Service over the 2015-2016 financial year.

16 PATHWAY PLANNING

Sharon Clarke, Service Manager, Children in Care and Leaving Care Service, introduced the report, which includes the current issues in relation to the legislative duties required by Nottingham City Council, in respect of those children eligible for a Pathway Plan. Sharon highlighted the following:

- (a) new government guidance, entitled 'Keep on Caring' will be looking at how the government may implement laws regarding corporate parenting to care leavers;
- (b) the council has a duty to ensure that all Pathway Plans are robust so it has implemented a new E-Pathway Plan to ensure plans are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely;
- (c) Pathway Plans do support young people from the ages of 15 -25, up to 25 if in full time education. All care leavers should have all their important documents available in case they need them. There is also a transitional social worker to assess as to whether they are eligible for adult services;
- (d) the percentage of applicable young people with a Pathway Plan started during the last quarter is 91.6%, which is below the target of 97% but this is improving;

The following points were raised during the discussion which followed:

- (e) all young people in care have a right to stay in care post-18 and there is a government grant for this. There are about 19 young people currently doing this, mostly in semi-independent provision. If a young person remains in foster care they will have a clear contract and are paid an allowance. The carer and young person negotiate their contribution;
- (f) the set maximum age for a young person to remain staying out is 21 but some young people may leave before this;
- (g) young people should be encouraged to save up money whilst they remain in care in order to afford accommodation when they leave care.

RESOLVED to continue to support and understand the required duties of Corporate Parents, in relation to Pathway Planning for children in care and care leavers.

17 FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Sonia Cain, Service Manager – Fostering and Adoption, introduced the report addressing strategies for the recruitment and retention performance of the Fostering Service, and the activities undertaken by the Service to recruit and support Foster Carers. Sonia highlighted the following:

- (a) nationally there is a shortage of foster carers with 9000 required each year to meet demand and a child coming into care every 20 minutes. In Nottingham there are a range of activities and promotional materials to help recruit them, and it was part of the labour group's manifesto to increase the number by 20%;
- (b) the council aims to place the majority of children in care into foster care because it mirrors a family setting. It is better if they are placed with in-house foster carers as they tend to live locally, so support services can work with them more easily;
- (c) the recruitment strategy includes advertising on the council website, monthly information sessions, promotion at local events and local markets. This is supported by two dedicated customer services officers;
- (d) research commissioned by Nottingham Trent University has shown that one of the best sources for recruitment is from existing foster carers promoting to their own family and friends. The council has therefore set up a scheme where existing foster carers can refer a friend and receive a financial incentive;
- (e) there is also a retention strategy for existing foster carers, which involves experienced social workers regularly visiting and looking at training and development needs. There are also support groups in Bulwell, Clifton and Lenton and a 6-weekly business meeting. Last year foster carers received GEM awards for the first time;
- (f) a number of foster carers are lost each year due to a variety of reasons such as retirement or significant changes in circumstances;
- (g) the council does also make use of independent fostering agencies where in-house foster carers are not available. There is significant cost to this so it is avoided where possible;

The following points were raised during the discussion which followed:

- (h) independent fostering agencies also have problems to recruit and retain foster carers;
- (i) big poster campaigns do help to keep the idea of fostering in the public eye, as many don't make an instant decision and come to the decision to become a foster carer over a longer period;
- (j) other cities in the East Midlands experience the same problems with recruitment as Nottingham. Rural areas tend to find it easier to recruit;
- (k) as well as general campaigns, recruitment is targeted where feasible to sectors such as health, the police and local schools. Other targets suggested by the Board included Neighbourhood Development Officers, Teaching Assistants and Head Teachers through the relevant networks. The council could also advertise at Nottinghamshire events outside the city boundary;
- (l) the fostering team is small and further marketing needs the wider council and local councillors to promote fostering through their networks.

RESOLVED to note the recruitment and retention performance of the Fostering Service, and the activities undertaken by the Service to recruit and support Foster Carers.

18 UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN

Steve Comb, Head of Children in Care, gave a verbal update on the dispersal process for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and its impact on Nottingham, highlighting the following:

- (a) there is likely to be an increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs) in Nottingham. At the moment Nottingham's position has not gone through the formal approval process and Nottingham won't be engaging with the process until this has happened;
- (b) in the last two years, Nottingham has increased its number of UASCs from 9 to 19 children. They may be required to take an additional 30-40 who will all have the rights of a child in care so Nottingham must ensure that it has the resources to cope with this increase;

Board members suggested placing UASCs with foster carers from refugee communities, however this would be difficult to approve due to their legal statuses and health checks.

19 VIRTUAL SCHOOL (VIRTUAL HEAD CHANGE)

Sarah Fielding, Director of Education, informed the Board that she has replaced Malcolm Wilson as Virtual School Head. An operational lead to support Sarah is currently being recruited.

20 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES UPDATE

Dino Labbatte and Marcel Reid, Registered Managers of Children's Residential Homes updated the Board on children's residential services in Nottingham, highlighting the following:

- (a) all of the 7 homes in the city received a good or outstanding in their Ofsted inspections last year. There are regulatory visits twice a year as well as internal inspections;
- (b) there may be changes and recommendations for children's residential as a result of the Narey report commissioned in October 2015;
- (c) outcomes for children have improved with the introduction of smaller homes. They are more homely and make it easier for positive relationships to develop between children and staff, and the negative behaviour associated with the larger children's homes have now been largely eradicated;
- (d) the introduction of a home specifically for emergency care has helped to stop children from leaving the city and not returning;

Councillor Mellen recently visited a children's residential home and extended an invitation for other Board members to do the same.

21 FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED to note the forward plan