

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 15 January 2018 from 2.31 pm - 3.28 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Ginny Klein (Vice Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Jim Armstrong
Councillor Nicola Heaton
Councillor Sue Johnson
Councillor Jackie Morris
Councillor Wendy Smith
Councillor Sam Webster

Absent

Councillor Marcia Watson

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Beverley Beattie - Foster Carer
Clive Chambers - Head of Service – Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Sharon Clarke - Service Manager, Children in Care
Ian Crompton - Fostering and Adoption Practice Manager and Panel Advisor
Racheal Osborne - CSE Coordinator and Missing Children's Team Manager
Patrick Skeete - Representation and Complaints Manager
Audrey Taylor - Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption
Zena West - Governance Officer
Jordan Whatman - Project Officer, Children in Care

43 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

TM, Foster Carer representative
Councillor Marcia Watson – personal reasons

44 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

45 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 20 November 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

46 FOSTERING AND ADOPTION PANEL CHAIR'S REPORT

Ian Crompton, Advisor to the Fostering and Adoption panel, presented a report on the Fostering and Adoption panels to the Board, highlighting the following points:

- (a) the last year has been quite busy for the Fostering and Adoption panels. Nottingham City is one of the few local authorities which run combined panels for

fostering and for adoption. Feedback is requested from those who attend panel, and 98% said the experience was positive, stating they had the opportunity to ask questions and felt they were listened to. In the last year the panel has started to give feedback on the quality of reports as well. 79% were of good or outstanding quality. This is the first year this has been measured so no comparisons are available to previous years;

- (b) the Fostering panel considers fostering applications, the annual review of foster carers, cases where any concerns have been raised, and connected persons hearings; where someone with a personal connection to the child or young person is considered as a potential foster carer;
- (c) the Adoption panel considers the approval of prospective adopters, as well as matches of adopters to children or young people;
- (d) all decisions of the panel go to the Agency Decision Maker for ratification;
- (e) membership of panels is constantly reviewed, this year Councillors Chris Tansley and Merlita Bryan have been appointed. Councillor panel members bring further qualities to panel through their own experiences.

The Board had a number of questions and comments, and some further information was provided:

- (f) a discrepancy matrix system is a tool for analysing reports and identifying where there is a lack of evidence that may cause the panel concern, or any issues regarding a lack of supporting information. It assists the panel members to be more analytical in their approach;
- (g) the youngest panel member at the moment is 29 years old. The panel has members who previously young people or children in care, one of whom was previously a member of the Children in Care Council. Recruiting and retaining younger people as panel members can be difficult, but the process is ongoing;
- (h) extra panels have been held recently, as there was a large number of potential foster carers waiting for approval;
- (i) nationally it is anticipated that around 33% of applicants to become foster carers would not complete the process. Nottingham City's dropout rate for potential foster carers is much lower. It is not known why this is the case,, but it is thought that it may be due to Nottingham City having a more thorough and targeted initial recruitment process;
- (j) a member of the Board fed back that, as a referee for a potential foster carer, they felt the process was very thorough, and wished to pass their compliments on to the Recruitment team.

RESOLVED to thank Ian Crompton for the update, and note its contents.

47 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Racheal Osborne, Child Sexual Exploitation Co-Ordinator and Missing Children's Team Manager, presented a report on safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation, highlighting the following points:

- (a) one of the developments since January 2017 is the new Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) toolkit, which includes Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire. Nottingham City has worked with a representative from Nottinghamshire County to develop the new toolkit. Some additional risk factors have been identified, such as children who have suffered sexual abuse previously, and those with a sibling connection to CSE;
- (b) the CSE toolkit has been distributed to partner agencies, once the toolkits are sent back for review, they are assessed for which cases meet the threshold for strategy meetings. It is the same 2 people who look at the toolkits, to ensure a consistent approach;
- (c) the toolkit enables a consistent approach to be taken across Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire. At a regional CSE meeting, work is underway to share local knowledge, including learning about identified risk factors. The multi-agency training plan is updated annually. Bespoke training is also provided to Local Authority Children's Homes for specific individuals if an issue is identified;
- (d) a project relating to hotels and the night-time economy, helping those involved to spot signs of CSE and help to stop it, called 'Operation MakeSafe' is ongoing;
- (e) the NSPCC Protect and Respect project continues, and a service called Raise offers services for those aged 18-25 to cover the gap in over 18s provision. Raise conducts 1 to 1 and group work, in a less formal setting than Protect and Respect;
- (f) the police hold a database called CAROSE (children at risk of sexual exploitation), which was previously just police led, but now involves partner agencies, who can also request that cases are added to the database that the police may not know about;
- (g) information is beginning to be compiled regarding adults of concern, so that any patterns can be spotted of particular names or addresses which keep cropping up, so that information can be shared with enforcement and prevention services as necessary;
- (h) the assessment of sexual harm panel, which concerns young people who present sexually exploitative behaviours, has now increased to a full day each month.

There were a number of questions and comments from the Board, and additional information was provided by Rachael Osborne and Clive Chambers (Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance):

- (i) one of the council plan commitments was to increase early identification. The CAROSE database has had a significant increase on the number of children at risk identified, which is a good indicator of the impact of the work, and partnership work, that has been happening. There is always more work to do though;
- (j) GPs are the holders of universal health records; they are the only professionals who will have the overview of a child's health. Whilst they often do not spend a lot of time talking to children and young people, they are therefore very important in the professional network. Training is also being developed for nurses and GP receptionists to help them spot signs or risk factors for CSE;
- (k) the relationship with Nottingham City schools is positive, and all schools are involved in the DSL network. Schools are encouraged to buy in to the LuvU2 resource, which helps raise awareness amongst young people. It is recognised that school budgets are challenged, they can work with the CSE Team to access alternative resources;
- (l) it is important that schools are having the right kind of dialogue with their pupils as part of the wider PSHE (personal, social and health education) provision;
- (m) the Missing Children's Team is very small, and conducts the majority of return interviews, but other teams may also conduct their own. All return interviews across the city are authorised by the Missing Children's Team Manager, to ensure consistency and enable any patterns to be spotted. It is also important to pay particular attention to 'hidden missing' cases, where the child or young person has not been reported missing in the first place, to see why that is. A regional protocol has been drafted so that this information can be shared across areas.

RESOLVED to thank Racheal Osborne and Clive Chambers for the update, and note the contents, particularly the performance information and proposed future development.

48 ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY

Audrey Taylor, Service Manager Fostering and Adoption, and Sharon Clarke, Service Manager Children in Care, presented a report on adoption and permanency, highlighting the following points:

- (a) children's services are increasingly under pressure to meet timescales for children who have an adoption plan. There are children under Nottingham City Council's care who are harder to place, which has an impact on performance. Regular adoption tracker meetings are held, to keep within timescales and monitor what is being done;
- (b) there are currently 84 children either with an adoption plan, or going through care proceedings where the Local Authority plan is adoption. Some of those children with an adoption plan in place may not necessarily end up with an adoption order. They are all monitored through the tracker meetings;

- (c) 29 children have been adopted between April and October 2017, with a further 14 children who are likely to be adopted before the end of this financial year, giving a total of approximately 42 children in this financial year with an adoption order;
- (d) previously there were not enough babies available for the number of applicants, so applications were not accepted from potential adopters who did not want an older child. There has recently been an increase in the number of babies, so now more adopters are needed to come forward, and work is underway to identify carers;
- (e) the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) allows adopters to apply for funding towards support of a therapeutic nature. It has been a successful year for applications to the ASF to offer a range of support. There is a cap on financial support from the ASF of £5,000.00 per child per financial year;
- (f) the East Midlands regional adoption agency should be set up by 2020, and will include Derby City, Derbyshire, Nottingham city, and Nottinghamshire. Work is ongoing regarding what the agency will look like in terms of practice and which services should be provided by the agency. The next stage involves a sign-off on the decision and confirmation as to who the host Local Authority will be;
- (g) the Permanency team has now been finalised; they manage the adoption of children. Success has been seen in terms of the quality of the work undertaken by the team. There is a good working relationship between the Permanency team and the home-finders;
- (h) the Permanency panel looks at those children who have a permanency plan other than adoption, to quality assure that the plan will meet the child's needs. The panel makes recommendations, which are then ratified by the Head of Service and Director. Once agreed, the child and carers will receive a certificate, which although not legally binding means a lot to the children: it takes away the fear that they will be removed again.

There were a number of questions and comments from the Board, and some further information was provided:

- (i) the process of agreeing which authorities should be involved in the regional adoption agency has been difficult. Some authorities have a very different approach to Nottingham City Council, and so trying to align these services has been difficult. The process started with 8 authorities, and is now down to those 4 whose profiles are similar;
- (j) the Permanency team works closely with D2N2 partners to ensure all authorities work consistently, and that adopters have a similar journey to permanence;
- (m) the Board felt that the new Permanency team was a very positive step and had shown some promising results.

RESOLVED to thank Audrey Taylor and Sharon Clarke for their update, and note the contents, particularly the performance information.

49 CHILDREN IN CARE - SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS

Patrick Skeete, Representation and Complaints Manager, presented a report on social care complaints from children and young people in care, highlighting the following points:

- (a) it is a statutory requirement to have an official complaints process for social care. Most complaints (87%) are managed at stage 1, including all of the complaints made by children and young people in care;
- (b) 11 out of 240 complaints to social care were made by children and young people in care. There is a commitment to resolve these complaints as soon as possible, with the longest one taking 14 days;
- (c) if a complaint is not dealt with within 20 working days, or the complainant is not happy with the outcome, then it will progress to stage 2, where an independent investigator is appointed. The investigator will have full access to case records, and relevant individuals involved in the complaint. An adjudication meeting is held at the end of the stage 2 process, to allow the complainant to discuss the outcomes;
- (d) within the Complaints team there is a specific phone for young people to make contact by alternative methods such as text, WhatsApp, and social media. Child friendly leaflets have been produced, and induction training for foster carers on helping their foster children to make complaints is also being investigated;
- (e) a close relationship exists between the Complaints team and operational colleagues.

There followed a number of questions and comments from the Board, and some additional information was provided:

- (f) there seems to be confidence in the complaints process amongst those young people who have made complaints, even though they have all been resolved at stage 1, most as 'not upheld';
- (g) some research has been undertaken as to whether young people are engaged with these processes. This has revealed that young people are engaged, and don't feel the need to make a formal complaint as they can resolve minor issues with services without the need to. Analysis of the effectiveness of the complaints process is conducted frequently;
- (h) there is a difference between a young person wishing to make a formal complaint about the service, or just having something to say about the care they've received. A number of contacts are treated more as ongoing discussion and feedback. Therefore a low number of complaints does not mean that children and young people aren't feeding back, engaging, and contributing to improving care;
- (i) all children's residential units are regularly visited by an independent advocate who can discuss issues and help them make complaints if required;

- (j) if an issue is addressed to the complainant's satisfaction within 24 hours, it is not recorded as an official complaint;
- (k) as a result of complaints and feedback, the Complaints team reports back to the whole department via performance management meetings. Feedback that is required to specific areas will be made directly to the managers responsible.

RESOLVED to thank Patrick Skeete for the update, and to note its contents.

50 FORWARD PLAN

Steve Comb (formerly the Head of Children in Care) has started working on a secondment basis for Kirklees Council, to be closer to home. Clive Chambers (Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance) will be undertaking Steve's role in his absence. A formal agenda item will be required once all posts are backfilled. The Statement of Purpose will also need updating, with a technical update required for noting at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held 19 March 2018. The forward planner was noted.

51 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR NOTING

Additional information was shared at the meeting for noting, which was not included on the original agenda:

- (a) thousands of presents were distributed to children in care over Christmas, coordinated by Sally Porter, Business Support Officer. Gifts were purchased and donated both by individuals and businesses;
- (b) volunteers including local Councillors collected items to fill 40 hampers for recent care leavers;
- (c) 550 tickets for the pantomime for children and young people in care were donated by Nottingham Playhouse and Theatre Royal;
- (d) the Nottingham Education Trust is a charitable trust which issues bursaries to help school children to expand their horizons, covering costs of up to £750 towards activities such as sport, music and school trips. This trust may be a good opportunity for children in care. Details should be passed on to anyone who may be interested. Recipients have to be City residents, Councillors will investigate if this can be expanded to Nottingham City children in care who are being cared for outside of the City boundaries. It is for any child or young person up to 21 years old: <http://www.collegest.org.uk/tnet/>