

## NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**MINUTES of the meeting held at LB31-32 - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 20 January 2014 from 14.30 - 16.17**

- ✓ Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
- ✓ Councillor Ginny Klein (Vice Chair)
- Councillor Georgina Culley
- ✓ Councillor Emma Dewinton
- ✓ Councillor Jackie Morris
- Councillor Eileen Morley
- ✓ Councillor Wendy Smith

✓ indicates present at meeting

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

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Helen Blackman | - Acting Director Children's Safeguarding             |
| Heidi Watson   | - Business in the Community (BITC) Regional Director, |
| Evonne Rogers  | - Business Strategy and Support                       |
| Lewis Fearon   | - Children in Care Council Member                     |
| Ben Attfield   | - Children in Care Council Support Officer            |
| Simon Down     | - Commissioning and Insight                           |
| Tanya Mackley  | - Foster Carer Representative                         |
| Elise Darragh  | - Insight Manager                                     |
| Robert Fagan   | - Marketing and Communications                        |
| Kirstie Gee    | - Marketing and Communications                        |
| Esme MacAuley  | - Marketing and Communications                        |
| Gill Moy       | - Nottingham City Homes                               |
| Kwesi Williams | - Project Officer, Children in Care                   |
| Laura Haxton   | - Quality and Commissioning                           |
| Sharon Clarke  | - Service Manager, Children in Care                   |
| Malcolm Wilson | - Virtual School, Education                           |
| Cath Pryor     | - Constitutional Services                             |

#### **33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Georgina Culley  
Councillor Eileen Morley (other Council Business)  
Bev Beatie - Foster Carer Representative  
Paulette Omennka-Thompson

#### **34 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

### **35 MINUTES**

Subject to the inclusion of Tanya Mackley, Foster Carer Representative, in the list of apologies, the Board confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2013, as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

Councillors requested that, as referred to in minute 29, paragraph (h), Anne Partington, as Acting Head of Safeguarding, arrange for the leaflet providing contact telephone numbers signposting citizens with concerns over child sexual exploitation to the appropriate service, to be circulated to all City Council Councillors.

### **36 FOSTERING AND ADOPTION MARKETING, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

Esme MacAuley, Children and Families Business Partner, and Kirstie Gee, Fostering and Adoption Marketing and Communications Officer, presented the report which was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. A copy of the presentation was submitted to the online agenda following the meeting.

A new directive from the Department for Education, requiring the adoption process to be speeded up, has, for Nottingham, been accompanied by an Adoption Reform Grant of £1.186 million from April 2013 to support the reform.

The current situation and processes were examined and consideration given to how to:

- (a) increase the number of suitable enquiries and applications (currently with a conversion rate of 39 enquiries for one successful application);
- (b) increase the number of Polish, Dual Heritage, Black Caribbean and respite carers and foster families who are able to place sibling groups and disabled children;
- (c) redress the balance of the City's young people in care to 80% with City Council Foster Carer's and 20% with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), from the current situation of 53:47.

The Fostering and Adoption marketing, recruitment and retention strategy takes an evidence based approach with mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation and reflects feedback from existing foster carers and adopters with the following:

- (d) a new branded profile with a fresh promotional approach including a new information pack with revised content and presentation;
- (e) demographic targeting of the communities;
- (f) skills based targeting of professionals and parents with strong transferable skills, especially with regard to supporting harder to place children.

Further promotional work is to be done:

- (g) during key national campaigns but with a localised focus;
- (h) increased advertising within the City on bus shelters, trams etc;
- (i) with press releases and radio interviews;
- (j) using the testimonials of current foster carers and adopters within promotional material;

- (k) with information stands at community events including the Nottingham Carnival, Splendour and Nottingham Pride;
- (l) holding recruitment road shows 'meet the carer' at smaller community events.

To help retain carers once they have been successfully recruited:

- (m) customer service provision was to be increased to prevent/resolve issues as quickly as possible and provide advice;
- (n) a foster carer newsletter is to be re-instated;
- (o) Support Groups are to be established;
- (p) foster carer business meetings are to be held to help gather information on how to improve the service and meet the needs of carers and young people.

It is anticipated that once the above are established, there will be fewer complaints, fewer carers leaving the City Council service, and an increase in word of mouth referrals.

Monitoring and evaluation will take place at every stage and for every campaign, with the focus on getting the appropriate people to apply and therefore raising the proportion of enquires/applicants to successful carers and adopters.

The revised approach had proved very successful during the National Adoption Week campaign when there had been a 1000% increase in visits to the website, requests for information packs had risen by 1800%, and three times as many people as usual had booked to attend an information evening.

Currently there is a campaign on recruiting more holiday and emergency foster carers while future campaigns will include, during March, a focus on recruiting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual foster carers and adopters and in May there is to be large national campaign 'fostering fortnight'.

Esme and Kirstie responded to the Board's questions as follows:

- (q) the pay levels of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) have historically been significantly higher than the levels which are paid by the City Council, however, this is under investigation by the Quality and Commissioning Team. Ideally the pay rates would be very similar;
- (r) feedback from carers had included comments that the photographs in the information pack should represent images of more real life children and families in real life settings and not use models. This had been applied and included an image disabled children in care. In addition to improving the links with the Disabled Children in Care team, links were also being established with the Caring for Adults and Disabled Adults Team;
- (s) The conversion rate of 39 enquiries to achieve 1 successful foster carer is a concern but with specifically targeted advertising, it is predicted that this ratio will improve. Independent Fostering Agencies don't release conversion rate information so it is not known what levels they achieve to be able to compare;
- (t) there is a relatively high 'churn' rate regarding retention of foster carers and although the improved customer support is expected to ease this to some extent, as existing carers will be subject to skills evaluation, the level of turnover may remain at a similar level or even rise until all had been assessed. All carers leaving the service of their

own accord will be asked for their reasons for leaving as part of the monitoring process.

The following comments were made by Councillors and Carer Representatives:

- (u) not all foster carers are driven by the pay or are looking to 'make a profit' but the pay that is available needs to be enough to cover the cost of carering. Higher pay is not the only benefit that some IFAs offer, there are often other incentives and a higher level of support with consideration given to ensuring that the services available to foster carers and adopters are flexible enough to fit around their care needs;
- (v) it is good that recruitment is reaching into a variety of communities but credit should be given to teenagers who often have views beyond being ethnically matched;
- (w) Nottingham City Homes has run advertisements for respite and emergency foster carers which generated a lot of enquiries. This short term care is an ideal test opportunity to help new carers experience short term fostering and decide if fostering is right for them;
- (x) it should be promoted that families can benefit from the diversity of the fostering experience, as can retired people who have experience of parenting;
- (y) targeted advertising through professional organisations such as the Police and other City Council partners would be beneficial, especially as IFAs already did this;
- (z) encouraging existing foster carers to talk with potential foster carers is a valuable promotional tool but there also needs to be a facility for carers to talk to carers outside of a formal environment. Voids of support, especially if Social Worker support is lacking, can be very damaging.

## RESOLVED

- (1) to approve the direction of travel which will ensure that Nottingham City Council is able to deliver a new way forward for the service to ensure that children are matched to suitable carers in a more timely manner.**
- (2) to acknowledge:**
  - (i) the importance of the role of marketing and Customer Services Officers in the drive to recruit more foster carers and adopters and improve outcomes for children in care;**
  - (ii) the work being carried out to put systems in place to reduce dependence on Independent Fostering Agencies in order to achieve significant cost savings for the council.**

## **37 CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2013-2015**

Kwesi Williams, Children in Care Project Officer, presented the report which informed the Board of the proposed Strategic Priorities and corresponding Strategic Priority Statements, identified through:

- Children in Care Joint Strategic Needs Assessment;
- Children in Care and Care Leavers 'Have your say' survey;
- consultation with relevant professional partners; and

- Children in Care Outcomes Group.

The comment of the Board is sought prior to the strategy being considered for approval by the City Council's Children and Families Leadership Team.

| Strategic Priority |  | Strategic Priority Statement (SPS) |  |
|--------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 1                  | Reduce substance misuse.   | 1                                  | To reduce young pregnancy and substance misuse. In addition to ensuring the timely completion of health checks, dental checks, immunisations, and SDQs.  |
| 2                  | Reduce young pregnancy.  |                                    |  |
| 3                  | To ensure the timely completion of health checks, dental checks, immunisations, and SDQs (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires).                      |                                    |  |
| 4                  | To reduce delays in securing permanency through adoption, special guardianship, residence orders and long term fostering.                                  | 2                                  | NCC believes that all children should grow up with their birth families. Where this is not able to happen we will secure permanency through adoption, special guardianship, residence orders or long term fostering.                                 |
| 5                  | Provide safe environments and stability in placement.  |                                    |  |
| 6                  | Ensure children in care and care leavers are better able to deal successfully with significant changes in their lives.                                     | 3                                  | To ensure children in care and care leavers are better able to deal successfully with significant changes in their lives. This includes improving transition into independence, and ensuring there are consultation and participation opportunities. |
| 7                  | Improve transition into independence.  |                                    |  |
| 8                  | Continue to seek the wishes and feelings of children in care and care leavers, and use this information to influence the care and support they experience. |                                    |  |
| 9                  | Ensure children in care know about the Advocacy, Independent Visitor, and Complaints service.  |                                    |  |
| 10                 | Improve educational attainment.  | 4                                  | To improve the educational attainment of children in care and to ensure care leavers engage in employment, education or training.  |
| 11                 | Support children in care and care leavers into employment, and training  |                                    |  |
| 12                 | Ensure care leavers have access to suitable accommodation and support.   | 5                                  | To ensure care leavers have access to suitable accommodation and support.  |
| 13                 | Reduce offending behaviour.  | 6                                  | To reduce offending behaviour through strong collaborative partnership work.   |

The Board noted that the Children in Care Council have seen and commented on the Strategic Priorities and Strategic Priority Statements.

## RESOLVED

- (1) **with reference to the proposed Strategic Priorities and Strategic Priority Statements, the following comments and requests of the Board, are reflected in a revised document:**
  - (a) **regarding strategy priority 11, 'Support children in care and care leavers into employment and training', this be extended to include volunteering and work experience;**

- (b) regarding Strategic Priority Statement (SPS) 6, 'To reduce offending behaviour through strong collaborative partnership working' the safety of vulnerable young people is guaranteed as much as possible and that it is ensured that young people do not return to environments of domestic violence, abuse and neglect which could influence future behaviour, be included in the revised draft document;**
- (c) the wording of SPS 4, Educational Attainment, be reconsidered to provide a stronger statement;**
- (2) to help support SPS 2, 'Permanency' , and SPS 3, 'Leaving Care', the feasibility of 'foster grandparents' be considered as additional support which is available for most families;**
- (3) once amended, the final draft of the Strategic Priorities and corresponding Strategic Priority Statements, are submitted to the next meeting of this Board, prior to consideration for approval by the Children and Families Leadership Team.**

### **38 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL - UPDATE**

Ben Attfield, Children In Care Council Support Officer, and Lewis Fearon, Children In Care Council member, delivered a verbal update on the latest activity of the Children In Care Council (CiCC), which included:

- participation in 'have your say' sessions;
- the complaints procedure has been discussed, including how issues could be resolved at an early stage. The complaints procedure was chosen for more detailed future work;
- there is to be a residential session later in the year which will help develop skills such as team building, interpersonal and leadership roles;
- children from the City and County came together to tender for youth advocacy work;
- an ofsted inspection is due so there will be issues to address from the report;
- there is to be a refreshed membership drive, possibly expanding the CiCC to facilitate all areas of Children in Care beyond the current arrangements of 14 years of age and above.

### **39 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, as defined in Paragraph(s) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.**

**40 VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEW OF COMMISSIONED SERVICE  
ASSESSMENTS OF FOSTERING APPLICANTS AND ADOPTERS**

Laura Haxton and Simon Down, Children and Families Quality and Commissioning Team, and Robert Fagan, Innovation and Change Manager, presented the report which summarised the outcome of the Value for Money Review of Commissioned Service Assessments of Fostering Applicants and Adopters.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) to note the review of the commissioned work;**
- (2) to request that the Board receive a more detailed report to a future meeting including more specific information on the cost and efficiency implications of the available and proposed options.**