

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 16 November 2015 from 14.31 - 16.00

Membership

Present

Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Ginny Klein (Vice Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Glyn Jenkins
Councillor Sally Longford
Councillor Wendy Smith

Absent

Councillor Sue Johnson
Councillor Marcia Watson
Councillor Sam Webster

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Helen Blackman	- Director for Children's Social Care
Clive Chambers	- Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Steve Comb	- Head of Looked After Children
Evonne Rogers	- Head of Business Support
Jon Rea	- Engagement and Participation Officer
Claire Shepherd	- Acting Adoption and Post Order Team Manager
Kwesi Williams	- Project Officer, Children in Care
Holly Macer	- Market & Contracts Lead Officer Placement Service
Gill Moy	- Nottingham City Homes
TM	- Foster Carer
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Sue Johnson (personal)
Councillor Sam Webster (personal)
Councillor Marcia Watson (personal)
Natalia Stachowiak
Jeren Artykova
Mary-Kate Gavin

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

29 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2015 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair informed the Board that this was the last meeting for Evonne Rogers, Head of Business Support, who has worked with the Children in Care and the Corporate Parenting Board, to assist care leavers in starting work within the City Council. In addition, Evonne has worked to ensure that the Council Plan now includes an agreement for the City Council to employ at least 10% of Nottingham's care leavers.

Members of the Board thanked Evonne for her contribution and wished her well in her future role.

30 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOSTERING SERVICE AND ADOPTION AGENCY

Steve Comb, Head of Looked After Children, introduced the report which presented the Statement of Purpose for the Local Authority's Adoption Agency, the Statement of Purpose for the Local Authority's Fostering Service, both of which are presented in line with the statutory requirement it is noted that Sonia Cain, Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption, is the named registered manager and has been approved by OFSTED

Steve highlighted the following points:

- (a) the Statements of Purpose set out the services objectives and enables individuals to be challenged if the objectives are not met;
- (b) changes to staffing, including staff allocation and legislation will be updated in these documents;
- (c) each child will have access to the Statement of Purpose;
- (d) the Statements will also consider Special Guardianship and will be updated on a regular basis to ensure that they are 'live';
- (e) provision and consideration of outcomes is part of the process for complaints to be raised and discussed. One aspect which has been raised as a concern is the support available and the quality of that support, this is currently receiving further consideration;
- (f) as a result of the issues raised against the service received compared to the objectives of the Statements, training quality has been strengthened, communication with foster carers improved, and for adoption, ensuring transparency for potential adopters, specifically with regard age ranges;
- (g) services continue to strive to provide the best quality foster care and adoption within the City.

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the contents of the Statement of Purpose for the Local Authority's Adoption Agency;**
- (2) to note the contents of the Statements of Purpose of the Local Authority's Fostering Agency;**

- (3) for further information on the changes made to the Statements to be submitted to a future meeting.**

31 CHILDREN IN CARE PLACEMENTS UPDATE

Holly Macer, Market and Contracts Lead Officer Placement Service presented the report which updates the Board on Children in Care placements.

The report provided the following information;

- (a) the breakdown of where children are placed;
- (b) the commissioning and sufficiency strategy;
- (c) commissioning priorities; the East Midlands regional children's framework; the residential care, contact.

Board member's questions were responded to as follows:

- (d) there has been an increasing number of children placed within 20 miles of the City;
- (e) the East Midland Regional Provider Framework will have been reviewed and in place by February 2016 and will include input from young people;
- (f) currently there appears to be a trend for more boys to live within the internal and external residential care while girls tend to be fostered. This may be in part down to behavioural issues or concerns as boys are often more challenging when troubled;
- (g) awareness of child sexual exploitation continues to be a priority.

Helen Blackman, Director of Children's Social Care, stated that the service is absolutely committed to finding young people, both male and female, the most suitable homes in foster families. It is noted that a new programme is about to launch which will focus on encouraging fostering of teenagers, with a target of finding a 25 new Foster carers willing to foster teenagers.

There is a drive to invest in Foster Carers, including expanding good quality training and support available.

Holly informed the Board that colleagues within the Children in Care Team work hard to try to identify internal placements wherever this is possible and consistent with the needs of the child/young person. Once all internal options are considered, if they are not appropriate only then will the service look to the external providers.

The number of looked after children is currently at a 30 year high nationally;

A member of the committee suggested that the service work closer with the City's employers as some Foster Carers had experienced difficulties trying to get leave for fostering training. In instances like this, it would be beneficial to ask employers what support they needed to help assist the Foster Carers;

Foster Carers present at the meeting stated that they disagreed with the perception that fostering is a business, as although the incomes were welcome this was not why the majority of carers fostered.

One Foster Carer commented that she had previously fostered for an independent fostering company which provided a good level of service with excellent training. This experience had proved helpful when starting to foster for Nottingham City Council. Helen Blackman, Director for Children's Social Care, responded that the Service aimed to further invest in Foster Carers and ensure that high quality training is provided which covers a range of topics.

Foster carers suggested that offering more training on specialist fostering issues would be helpful and encourage existing carers to consider more challenging but rewarding children.

RESOLVED to note the report.

32 ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY

Claire Shepherd, Acting Adoption and Post Order Team Manager, presented the report which provides the permanency performance of the Local Authority for adoptions and special guardianship for the period 31 March to 31 October 2015.

The report provided information on the numbers and progress of the 91 children with Adoption Plans and the 30 children with Placement Orders.

It is noted that last year the achievement of 70 adoptions was considerable and was unlikely to be repeated this year for a range of factors.

Specialist Guardianship Orders, which are an alternative form of permanence have increased across the Country. This option is usually chosen where a person is in some way already connected to the child, often by a family connection, although they may not have met the child previously. Entering into a Special Guardianship Order can be processed by the courts much faster than adoption. This has been raised as a concern by Local Authorities who are requesting the same intensity of assessment as is required for adoption, especially as once a Special Guardianship Order is in place, this can become very complex for young people regarding contact arrangements. Central Government is looking to align Special Guardianship Orders more closely with adoption but this will have an impact on practice and performance locally as it will be more resource intensive. That said, the City Council has already reviewed local practice and introduced significantly more rigorous processes to both approval and on-going support/monitoring.

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the performance to date in adoption and Special Guardianship and the activities being taken to minimise delays;**
- (2) for the Adoption and Permanency report to be presented to Corporate Parenting Board in May in future years 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) **for a further report to be provided to a future meeting providing more detail on Special Guardianship Orders.**

33 CHILDREN IN CARE SERVICE (CONCISE) PERFORMANCE REPORT: QUARTER ONE AND TWO 2015

Steve Comb, Head of Children in Care, presented the report which provides a summarised performance of results for quarters one and two of 2015, with commentary.

Steve highlighted the following points:

- (a) as of today there are 596 children in care within the City;
- (b) the number of children in care has increased nationally as well as locally;
- (c) unless it is not safe, it is still the aim to support children and families to stay together;
- (d) long-term fostering is also available as a permanence option for some children;
- (e) with regard to performance indicator at CC -1a(E), currently there are 10 unaccompanied asylum seeking young people within the city. With the large numbers of displaced people entering Europe, high risk asylum seeking families will be invited to the country first. Efforts are underway to forge stronger links with faith groups to try and broaden the range of potential Foster carers;
- (f) with regard to performance indicator CC – 8(NI62), the percentage of children in care that had three or more placement moves in the previous 12 months, this applied to 116 young people last year with a target of 75. In this year to date, 44 young people have experienced three or more placement moves;
- (g) with regard to CC – 9, the percentage of placements that are over 20 miles from Nottingham, as of today this stands at 15.6%, which is just above the revised target of 15% which was agreed at full Council.

The Chair commended children in care staff for their work to try and ensure that, where safe, children remained with their families.

RESOLVED to acknowledge the current performance position of the Children in Care Service against identified key performance indicators (KPIs).

34 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL - VERBAL UPDATE

Jon Rea, Engagement and Participation Officer, provided a verbal update on the activities and forthcoming events of the Children in Care Council.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) the 'have your say' survey has been released and the deadline for returns is 7 December 2015. Members are asked to encourage young people to complete and return the survey;

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- (b) to date 738 surveys have been sent out and 14% have been returned. The target return rate is set at 20%;
- (c) the Corporate Children in Care Council will meet on 30 November with a focus on placements. The Chair and Corporate Directors have been invited to attend and the young people will present an item 'Right Placement at the Right Time';
- (d) there are currently 14 active members of the Corporate Children in Care Council with several waiting to join once they meet the qualifying age. Applications are still encouraged;
- (e) the Lord Mayor's vent in December will recognise the work of young people.

RESOLVED to note the update.

35 FORWARD PLAN

Resolved to note the forward plan, subject to the following:

- (i) **for the Adoption and Permanency Report to be submitted to the May 2016 meeting;**
- (ii) **for an update on the changes to Adoption Legislation to be submitted to a future meeting;**
- (iii) **for further information regarding Special Guardianship Orders to be submitted to a future meeting.**