

Nottingham City Council

Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 18 July 2022 from 2pm – 3.25pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Cheryl Barnard (Chair)
Councillor Merlita Bryan
Councillor Jay Hayes
Councillor Phil Jackson
Councillor Maria Joannou (Vice Chair)
Councillor Salma Mumtaz
Councillor Georgia Power
Councillor Andrew Rule

Absent

Councillor Eunice Campbell-Clark
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Mary-Anne Cosgrove	- Head of Children's Regulated Services
Treza Mann	- Interim Service Manager for Children in Care and Leaving Care Service
Sameer Patel	- Team Manager for Leaving Care Service
Jon Rea	- Engagement and Participation Lead Officer
Audrey Taylor	- Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption
Kate Morris	- Governance Officer

10 Change in Membership

The Board noted the appointment of Councillor Eunice Campbell- Clark and Councillor Salma Mumtaz and the resignation of Councillor Ethan Radford.

11 Apologies for absence

Councillor Eunice Campbell-Clark – On Leave
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos - Unwell

Alison Platkiw – Principal Manager (IRO Team)
Catherine Underwood – Corporate Director for People

12 Declarations of Interests

In the interests of transparency, Councillor Power declared that she is employed by The Children's Society as their Local Public Affairs Manager.

This did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion or voting on any item on the agenda.

13 Children in Care Council Workshop

Jon Rea, Engagement and Participation Lead, gave an update to the Committee on the Workshop held at the Children in Care Council meeting in June combining agenda items 4 and 5. The Workshop looked at education, and Jacki Blossom from the Virtual School attended. The following points were highlighted:

- (a) The session focused on the thoughts and experiences of the group around the Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and the support available to children in care around accessing Education;
- (b) Council members talked about how the PEP was introduced to them, how they were engaged with their plans and the its ongoing management;
- (c) The group was a mix of young people both in care and care leavers and the feedback around the PEP was generally positive. The young people did not like the rating system used, which they felt needed to be more meaningful, however they reported that workers engaged well with them and over all they liked the plans;
- (d) The young people offered challenge around hybrid working and moving to a more electronic based way of working. Members of the group preferred a paperless system but recognised that some people may find a system with paper copies of work more accessible. Finding a balance and tailoring the work for individuals to access is key;
- (e) Nottingham City Council is introducing the Lundy Model of participation to help engage young people with their PEP more effectively. This model centres around 4 chronological elements, space, voice, audience and influence;
- (f) The PPP totals £500 per young person in care per term. It can be used to fund a variety of things, including activities to boost self confidence and resilience, staff training, and many other things to facilitate learning. Examples given were a purchase of a trumpet and music lessons, purchase of a laptop to facilitate remote learning, and a trip to France;
- (g) Not enough young people or their carers know about the PPP and the benefits it can bring to a young person's education. Young people in the group who had received the PPP commented that it was an opportunity for them to really consider what would help them, and felt like it was an investment in their future and their own outcomes;
- (h) Better ways of communicating information about the PPP to young people and carers need to be considered;
- (i) There was further conversation with the group about support post 16, and onward, from school into university;
- (j) The Virtual School team took away a number of good suggestions and both the school and the Council group agreed to continue to work closely together to further develop the good relationship.

Following questions and comments from Board members the following points were discussed:

- (k) A more child friendly way to communicate important information about the PPP is needed. This can go into the monthly Virtual School Bulletin, and consideration will be given on how best to spread the information in an accessible way to both young people and carers;
- (l) Momentum has been building around the Lundy Model which was first developed in 2007. It is developing more traction and works well with established trauma informed practice. The Council is aiming to develop champions in the method to encourage its use more widely and this practice will develop to suit the City and the young people it supports. Region wide training is taking place in the near future;

The Board thanked Jon Rea for his updated.

14 Pathway Plan for Care Leavers

In a change to the order of the published agenda and with the agreement of the Chair the Board took item 9, Pathway Plan for Care leavers as the next item.

Treza Mann, Interim Service Manager for Children in Care and Leaving Care Service, and Sameer Patel, Team Manager for Leaving Care Service gave a verbal update to the Board to address issues raised at the last board meeting (minute 63 Children in Care / Leaving Care - 2021/22 Q4 performance Report). They highlighted the following points:

- (a) Pathway plans are created in collaboration between a young person and their Social Worker when a young person is aged 15/16 and puts in place plans to support that young person into independence. It is reviewed on a 6 monthly basis, or sooner if a young person's circumstances significantly change. Once the young person leaves care the plan is transferred to the Personal Advisor in the Leaving Care Team;
- (b) At the last Corporate Parenting Board in May 2022, concerns were raised that only 76% of plans were being reviewed within the 6 month target. Target performance for this figure is 95%;
- (c) The primary reason for the drop off in performance is staff absence, with the team operating with reduced numbers of Social Workers due to long term sickness until very recently. Although there is still absence within the team this is now much reduced. This long-term absence has had a knock on effect on the reviews in terms of capacity of the remaining team members;
- (d) Agency staff were recruited to create more capacity, however many young people prefer to engage with workers they are familiar with when planning for their future, and Pathway Plan reviews can be a sensitive and personal process they are unwilling to engage with, with workers they are unfamiliar with;
- (e) Between February and March in 2022 the performance increased to 82.2%, which has since increased to 86% as of the date of this meeting. It is taking

time for young people to feel comfortable and bond with new workers, but progress is being made;

- (f) The Leaving Care Team is focusing on regaining stability and increasing capacity. Specialist workers, such as Housing and Mental Health specialists are now working within the team, directly with young people to provide specific and expert advice in a timely manner. This creates additional time for Personal Advisors. This place based work is funded through a number of different streams including the Levelling Up fund, the Staying Close fund and funding from Banardo's; (is this right - my notes aren't 100% clear, sorry.)
- (g) Now that the Pathway plans are an embedded process and with increased capacity within the team there is an opportunity to focus on the quality of the plans, progress around performance targets will be monitored closely;

Committee members asked a number of questions, and during discussion the following points were made:

- (h) The structure of the Leaving Care team is being carefully considered to ensure that the resources are in place to allow workers to fully support young people. Workers are being allocated to young people 6 months before their transition to the Leaving Care Team to allow time for the work and the young person to form a relationship;
- (i) The additional funding used to facilitate the place based work is only short term. Moving forward the posts will be funded through the savings they generate elsewhere within the service. The 2 years funding gives an opportunity to assess the impact and outcomes for young people and to further develop Partnerships with other agencies;
- (j) The target of 95% of Pathway Plans being reviewed every six months should be achieved by autumn time. The team are all working hard to achieve this, and will continue to work hard to maintain that performance;
- (k) It is important that Pathway Plans are relevant, and meaningful to the young person. Plans are completed where possible with the young person and are written in the young person's words. They focus on areas where additional support is needed to help the young person to move to independence;
- (l) Where young people are not engaging with the Plan they are developed so that should the young person choose to reengage there is foundation to work on;
- (m) There is a set of standard information that is required in each Plan to ensure that the focus is in the right areas.

Committee members thanks Treza and Sameer for their report and asked for a written report to be circulated.

Audrey Taylor, Service Manager for Adoption and Fostering presented the Annual Fostering Service report for 2021/22. She highlighted the following points:

- (a) There has been a slight reduction in the number of carers, including mainstream and connected persons, from the previous year, down by 50. Of those who left, 24 were due to positive outcomes;
- (b) In the period covered by the report there were 7 allegations made against carers, 4 of these were referred to the Fostering Panel to review their fostering approval status, 2 resulted in no further action, 1 was to progress with monitoring. 3 applications were referred for independent review, all three of those were upheld;
- (c) The cohort of connected persons continues to grow with 97 children placed in 71 families. Work continues to take place with the D2N2 partnership to upskill foster carers and provide training pre approval and includes details of Therapeutic Parenting. Connected Carers also have a specific support group as well as access to other support groups across the service;
- (d) Further work is focusing on the recruitment strategy and is being undertaken as part of the Council's Transformation Programme. Investment and technical support are needed to ensure a modern recruitment process;
- (e) The Service continues to work with carers, offering support groups monthly, and further support meetings every 6 weeks. These meetings and groups take place at a variety of times of the day to ensure everyone is able to access them. These continue to be virtual at the moment and are working well. Carers have feedback that they feel more able to attend virtual groups as there is no need for travel and it is easier to access;
- (f) There is a monthly newsletter that goes to all carers which advises of upcoming and available training and support, staffing changes and events run by the service;
- (g) 2021/22 was a challenging year in terms of fostering, particularly as a result of Covid with a number of foster carers resigning after they put their caring status on hold during the pandemic.

Board members asked a number of questions and commented on the content of the report. The following points were highlighted:

- (h) The fall in the number of carers can be seen in many local authorities and is a national trend;
- (i) The process of applying to be a foster carer can feel invasive and very personal. Potential carers will be asked about their own childhood, and as part of the application ex partners can be approached but this is all important information to assess Safeguarding. Carers often find it a difficult process to go through with some feeling left unsupported. Support Social Workers are allocated to the prospective carers and feedback on the process is always welcomed;

- (j) Where carers resign, reasons are recorded. For many carers it is because of a change in circumstances, work or family related. The population of current carers is getting older and many are retiring through age;
- (k) Recruitment is still taking place virtually. Face to face events have been trialled post lockdown but with very little attendance and often no one who expressed an interest going forward to apply. To be more resource effective the recruitment strategy is looking at targeted advertising via social media and through community groups reaching into different communities with a focus on BAME foster carers are needed. There is extensive evidence that this targeted method is more resource effective than the large scale face to face events previously held;
- (l) There has been an issue around the stability of provision of support social workers, however the team has recruited experienced staff and work to stabilise the team is well under way. A stable relationship with the support social worker is necessary for potential carers to engage well with them;
- (m) The current conversion rate of people expressing an interest in fostering to becoming a carer is around 12%, which is good.

The Board thanked Audrey Taylor for her updated.

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.

16 Fostering Panel Chair's Report 2021/22

Audrey Taylor, Service Manager for Adoption and Fostering presented the Fostering Panel Chair's report 2021/22 which details the numbers of foster carers and children, strengths and achievements of the service and performance targets and measures. She highlighted the following points

- (a) Fostering Panels have been running virtually since the start of the pandemic and the national lockdown in March 2020. Both panel members and applicants have provided feedback that they like the virtual format as it makes participation easier and more convenient. This feedback is typical of that across the country;
- (b) There has been a drop in applicants from 2020/21 to 2021/22 with a reduction in mainstream applicants and an increase in 1st annual reviews, as there had been some back log due to the pandemic. There was also an increase in the number of reviews as a result of concerns; the number of terminations of approval stayed stable;
- (c) The Panel have commented that reports they receive are of a good standard, and decision have been made within timescales;
- (d) Areas identified for improvement include increased members from under represented communities and to increase diversity on panels to be more representative of the community and service users;

Resolved to note the activities of the Fostering Panels

17 Unregulated and Unregistered Placements - Children in Care

Mary-Anne Cosgrove, Head of Children in Care, presented the report detailing the key issues in relation to unregulated and unregistered placements for Children in Care and local processes as requested by the Board at its meeting in March 2022 (Minute 57). She detailed the difference between unregulated and unregistered settings and outlined the following points:

- (a) Unregistered provision is when a child/young person who is being provided with some form of 'care' is living somewhere that is not registered with Ofsted, this is not a legal placement. All placements of this nature must be reported to Ofsted;
- (b) It has been a challenge for local authorities across the country to establish sufficient placements for young people and may be staying in unregulated placements, which means that the placement is not inspected by Ofsted, although this will change in the future;
- (c) Where 16 and 17yr olds are placed in supported accommodation, this is not regulated. This is not an ideal placement but where the young person is assessed as being able to live in semi independence it is a legal placement. Such placements come with additional support and visits from key workers to help the young person settle into independent living by establishing routines. Throughout their time in these unregulated placements Social workers will be searching for more regulated placements;
- (d) These placements, although unregulated by Ofsted are lawful;
- (e) In Nottingham City there is a small number of young people in this type of placement, the published report states 6 but this has reduced since the agenda was published;
- (f) There is daily work to ensure that young people are not in unregulated care settings as long term arrangements. A weekly report is shared with the Director for Integrated Children's Service and the Corporate Director for People detailing unregulated placements and the efforts to find alternative provision. There are very clear and detailed safety plans in place which are regularly monitored to ensure the unregulated placement continues to be safe.

Board members asked a number of questions and the following details discussed:

- (g) Unregulated placement of young people into semi-independent living only happens if they are assessed as ready for it, and only happens on the rare occasion that a regulated placement cannot be found;
- (h) Searches for regulated provision take place daily. For a small number of young people it can be difficult to find regulated placements, but Social Workers work with the young person on behaviour and routine that helps them to adapt to the semi independent living model or to find regulated placement;

- (i) Concerns were raised about a specific case in Birmingham where a 2 children had dies in an unregulated provision. Young people from Nottingham had also placed there, and the Board sought assurance that this placement was appropriate. In response the Director of Integrated children's Services informed the Board that Local Authorities share information with each other when a child moves out of the area. Where children are placed outside Nottingham City checks with the local authority are done to ensure there are no safeguarding issues. Details of new placements are shared with regional and neighbouring authorities and wherever the young person is placed there will be additional oversight and visits by the Social worker just as there in when they are placed within the City;
- (j) Where a placement has failed an inspection Ofsted will inform local authorities, and their reports are published on the intranet so checks on out of city placements can be done easily and where a care setting is deregistered by Ofsted they write out to all Directors responsible for children in care to advise them of the deregistration;
- (k) Within the East Midlands there is a semi-independent living framework so new setting are asked to join that before a young person is placed there. Most regional areas have this kind of framework and so if a provision is not part of it then additional checks are initiated;
- (l) There is a network of commissioners for the D2N2 area that work closely with children's services to ensure provision is appropriate. This framework has been developed and provision is fully checked and due diligence completed before they are accepted. It allows block contracting and this is bolstered by te provision from Barnardos supported lodging. Mock inspections of provisions do take place;
- (m) Board members gave positive feedback following a recent a visit to one provision within the city;

Resolved to note the different types of placement arrangements and the processes in place to ensure management oversight.

18 Work Programme 2022/23

The Board noted the work programme going forward.

19 Dates of future meetings

The Board noted the next meeting day Monday 19 September 2022 at 2pm.