

## NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 21 November 2016 from 14.30 - 16.03**

#### **Membership**

##### Present

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

##### Absent

Councillor Sue Johnson  
Councillor Marcia Watson

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

Julia Stachowiak	) Children in Care Council
Richard Warsop	) (& Care Leaver)
Jordan Whatman	- Children in Care Project Officer
Sharon Clarke	- Children in Care Service Manager
Sonia Cain	- Fostering and Adoption Service Manager
Helen Blackman	- Director of Children's Integrated Services
Clive Chambers	- Head of Safeguarding and Quality
Steve Comb	- Head of Children in Care
Michael Rowley	- Lead Contracts Officer, Placement Service
Sophie Russell	- Head of Children's Strategy and Improvement
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

#### **34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Sue Johnson – leave  
Councillor Marcia Watson – personal  
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#### **35 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

#### **36 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2016 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**37 CHILDREN IN CARE SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT: QUARTER ONE AND QUARTER TWO 2016 - 2017**

Steve Comb, Head of Service for Children in Care (CiC), introduced the report which presented the CiC Performance information for Quarters One and Two.

The report and appendix details the performance of the CiC Section with comparative figures statistical neighbouring authorities. It is noted that nationally the numbers of CiC has risen significantly since April 2016.

The following points were highlighted and Councillor's questions were responded to as follows:

- (a) with regard to the aspiration for all CiC, no matter what issues they may have, to be returned to their families or adopted, adoption matching remains a very thorough process. Ideally adoptions should be swift and although timeliness has improved, Nottingham City Council has been challenged by Central Government on the length of time taken for the matching and adoption process to be completed as the 'score card' time targets are not being met. This is particularly poignant where a child has complex needs. However, the focus remains to identify the best match of family for that child to ensure the best outcomes for everyone. Success of this has been evidenced by the outcomes of inspections where every individual case was examined and no fault found. Nottingham's thorough approach to matching should be used to challenge the 'score card' system which focuses on time and not results;
- (b) formerly the Performance Indicator (PI) target was for Local Authorities was to achieve an adoption rate of 10% of the children in their care. If Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) are included within the adoption rates, Nottingham is achieving this even though the SGO regulations have become more substantial;
- (c) with regard CiC not attending health checks, particularly dental checks, this is an issue nationally. It is recognised that some children can have a 'white coat phobia' which can be as a result of medical examinations and tests associated with early neglect and/or associated with being removed from their family. These Children can be reluctant to attend medical and dental appointments but this monitored and where appropriate, incentives such as the offer of event tickets or activities combined with a trip to the dentist have proven to be successful in encouraging CiC to attend appointments;
- (d) when children and young people enter care they receive a robust physical and mental health assessment from the specialist CiC Doctor who then provides a health and dental plan;
- (e) when the performance information is generated, if any areas of concern are identified, they are highlighted with managers and staff and mechanisms jointly proposed to address issues where this is possible;
- (f) a new Operations Manager is due to start in post at the Virtual School very soon and their primary focus will be on improving the quality and provision of Personal Education Plans (PEPs). There has been some performance slippage in this area which is being addressed;

- (g) the target of 95% of CiC having a quality PEP in place by the end of the financial year remains relevant and is achievable with progress already being realised. The introduction shortly of an electronic form (e-PEP) will aid real-time quality monitoring, responses and ensure that reminders of timelines for Social Workers (who complete PEPs in consultation with Schools) will be issued and can be traced;
- (h) the majority of care leavers are in suitable accommodation but the PI statistics provided include a few young care leavers who are in custody. This is not considered suitable accommodation but is outside the Local Authority's powers to change;
- (i) Nottingham City Homes (NCH) is currently trying to expand its offer of semi-independent homes for care leavers within the City;
- (j) Nottingham compares well with other authorities for the numbers of young care leavers in Education, Employment or Training (EET), but there is still room for improvement;
- (k) there has been some good news recently where a family of 6 children ranging in age from 6 months to seven years old were adopted as a family unit.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) to acknowledge the current performance position of the Children in Care Service, against identified key performance indicators (KPIs):**
- (2) for a detailed report on the work plan to achieve meaningful PEPs to be submitted to the January meeting of the Committee.**

## **38 ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY**

Sonia Cain, Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption, and Sharon Clarke, Service Manager for Children in Care (CiC), introduced the report which updates the Board on performance to date from 1 April 2016, of Permanency Planning for Children in Care.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) 25 children have been adopted so far this year and it is predicted that 45-50 will be adopted by 31 March 2017;
- (b) 24 children have been matched with adopters;
- (c) 294 children are being supported by Special Guardianships;
- (d) 84 children have adoption plans in place;
- (e) 14 children have had their adoption plans rescinded as all possibilities to find an adoptive home have been exhausted. Some of these children are likely to remain with their foster carer in a permanent arrangement;

- (f) the adoption timescales set by Central Government set can be hard to meet for children with complex needs and this is reflected in the City's overall performance;
- (g) when children cannot be matched with City adopters, interagency matches are sought. However the Central Government budget for interagency adoption is to be totally withdrawn which will place a significant pressure on the adoption budget;
- (h) 30 prospective adopters are being assessed with a further 30 approved and waiting to be matched;
- (i) 35 applications have been made or are in the process of being submitted to the Government's Adoption Support fund. All successful applications require match funding from the Local Authority;
- (j) plans to establish the East Midlands Regional Adoption Agency (EMRAA) by 2020 are progressing and the Chair of this Committee is a member of the EMRAA. Different local authorities have different models of working so there will need to be a single co-ordinated approach which is yet to be defined. It's not yet clear if there will be any staffing implications but the overview of the proposals will be presented to the Committee once they emerge;
- (k) the Permanency Panel ensures that legislation requirements are met in care planning for a child's permanence, it hears applications for Special Guardianship and ensures that the child's needs are met;
- (l) once a permanency plan is agreed, there is an expectation that the plan will be followed until the child reaches 18 years of age, sometimes beyond.

Councillors' comments were responded to as follows:

- (m) when foster careers adopt the child they have been fostering, they will receive an adoption allowance which is less than the fostering allowance but adoption provides permanency which is the best outcome for the child. They will also become eligible for child benefit. If the child, not babies, has more complex needs which meet criteria, they may be eligible for additional allowances;
- (n) adopters are supported and helped to build resilience by the Fostering and Adoption Team until the child reaches 18 years of age, and sometimes beyond. This includes helping to find and apply for benefits if the family financial circumstances change;
- (o) although the aspiration is to find a placement for every child, where children cannot be placed within 18 months, inter-agency arrangements are considered;
- (p) due to the number adopters wanting to adopt a child aged up to 2 years old, no further adopter applications are being accepted for this group unless they are willing to adopt a child of this age as part of a family group;
- (q) all applications for the Adoption Support Fund have been accepted but do require match funding from the Local Authority for amounts of £5,000 or over;
- (r) where SGOs are in place, it's important that guardians can approach the Local Authority for advice and guidance, wherever they are located.

## RESOLVED

- (1) to note the performance to date in relation to Permanency Planning for Children in Care, which can be in the form of adoption, permanent fostering or special guardianship;
- (2) to present the Adoption and Permanency report twice a year to the Corporate Parenting Board, to include a year-end report which will enable the Adoption Leadership Board data for the previous year to be considered and reviewed.

### **39 CHILDREN IN CARE PLACEMENTS – COMMISSIONING AND SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2016-2018**

Michael Rowley, Placements Service Lead Contracts Officer, introduced the report which presents the Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy for 2016-18.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) it is a statutory requirement to have a Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy in place;
- (b) as of 11 October 2016, 603 children were in care, 465 were placed with foster carers, of which only 191 were internal/Nottingham City selected foster carers, the remainder being external agency carers;
- (c) 50 children are in external placements outside of the City;
- (d) the numbers of children in residential care are not increasing;
- (e) there has been analysis of why placements have broken down to understand and prevent future breakdowns and roll out approaches which work well;
- (f) the East Midlands Regional Children's Framework (EMRCF) is now well established and able to provide advice on contracts;
- (g) Commissioning priorities are set out within the report.

Councillor's questions were responded to as follows:

- (i) recognising complex needs such as mental health issues, is improving with solutions and/approaches sought in conjunction with health colleagues. Although providing a good service, improvements continue to be sought, including to 'off the peg' model options;
- (ii) future commissioning arrangements will be kept under review to ensure improving outcomes and cost efficiency. Where good outcomes are not achieved, contracts will not be renewed;
- (iii) semi-independent living providers are private businesses which will attract young care leavers from other parts of the Country so not all of the places will be available to Nottingham care leavers.

Care Leavers commented that for placements there will be an element of trial and error, but everyone involved has to work together and ensure effective communication.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**40 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: FOSTERING SERVICE AND ADOPTION AGENCY**

The provision and presentation of the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service and Adoption Agency is a statutory requirement in setting out the aims and objectives of how each service will operate.

Copies of each Statement (revised October 2016) are included in the agenda.

**RESOLVED to note the report and contents of the Statements of Purpose for Fostering Service and Adoption Agency.**

**41 URGENT ITEM - UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKER CHILDREN**

The Chair of the meeting was of the opinion that this item, although not included on the agenda, should be considered as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, in view of the special circumstances that this is an issue on which the Committee needs to be informed and it is not appropriate to delay the information until the next meeting.

Sophie Russell, Head of Children's Strategy and Improvement, verbally updated the Committee on the current position regarding unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), including answering the Board's questions and highlighting the following points:

- (a) Nottingham has always hosted UASC but the numbers entering the country are increasing and the Home Office have launched a national dispersal scheme to spread numbers to local authorities across the county;
- (b) there is a target for Nottingham City to progress towards supporting 45 UASC (0.07% of our child-age population). We are currently supporting 23 UASC. Only two of these have been transferred from other local authorities under the dispersal scheme (Northamptonshire and Kent);
- (c) nationally, the majority of UASC are young males aged 16/17 years old and generally of Middle Eastern and North African origin, but there is a mix of profiles and nationalities;
- (d) UASC can arrive in the City and ask for assistance outside of the dispersal scheme. The City Council will then assess their age and try to determine if they have relatives who can support them in the UK;
- (e) for those young people who can be reunified with family in Nottingham the family are visited by social work colleagues to assess and check that the environment is safe and suitable for the young person and that the family member/s are willing and able to support the young person. These reunified young people are considered to be

children in need and are not unaccompanied. This means that they are not deemed to be children in care;

- (f) any UASC in the care of the City Council will have the same full access to all relevant services as other children in care;
- (g) the CiC Doctor undertakes a full medical assessment of the young person, including dental, mental health and immunisations;
- (h) all UASC have access to ESOL as a priority to help them settle, enter mainstream schools and colleges and ease integration;
- (i) 30 care leaver asylum seekers remain supported by the City Council.

**RESOLVED to note the update.**

## **42 FORWARD PLAN AND CHILDREN IN CARE UPDATE**

Jordan Whatman, Children in Care Project Officer, presented the Forward Plan to which the Committee have added Personal Education Plan as an item for a future meeting.

Jordan introduced Julia Stachowiak and Richard Warsop, Children in Care Council (CiCC) Members who provided the following update:

- (a) on 25 November the Children's Commissioner's Takeover event will take place where young people can be 'buddied' to shadow professional people, possibly including a Councillor or MP, for the day. Care leaver Larelle will be 'taking over' in the Eat Culture Loxley House Canteen, with 3 other Children in Care Council members, serving a winter warmer menu designed by Larelle;
- (b) the last meeting of CiCC was held on 26 September and asked what would change to become a good care leaver, and what could the Local Authority change to help this. The next CiCC will be held on 28 November and will focus on the theme of 'Change and Change Management';
- (c) the Children in Care Club is currently recruiting new members aged 8-11 and will hold an event on Monday 19 December at the Council House from 4.30pm to 6.30pm with arts and crafts, Santa, and a forum discussion around young people's experiences in care.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) to note the forward plan;**
- (2) to note the Children in Care Council update and record the thanks of the Board to Julia and Richard for their attendance.**