

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 18 January 2019
from 2.30 pm - 4.00 pm**

Membership

Present

Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Glyn Jenkins
Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor Wendy Smith

Absent

Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Jim Armstrong
Councillor Nicola Heaton
Councillor Sue Johnson
Councillor Marcia Watson
Councillor Cate Woodward

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Helen Blackman	- Director of Children's Integrated Services
Clive Chambers	- Head of Children in Care
Ian Crompton	- Fostering and Adoption Panel Advisor
Ian Hillier	- Complaints Officer
TM	- Foster Carer
Gill Moy	- Nottingham City Homes
Audrey Taylor	- Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption
Jordan Whatman	- Project Officer, Children in Care
Phil Wye	- Governance Officer

41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Jim Armstrong – other Council business
Councillor Nicola Heaton – work commitments
Councillor Ginny Klein – personal reasons
Councillor Marcia Watson – work commitments
Councillor Cate Woodward – other Council business

Nick Lee, Director of Education Services

42 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

43 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

44 FOSTERING AND ADOPTION PANEL CHAIR'S REPORT

Ian Crompton, Panel Advisor, introduced the report on the activity of the fostering and adoption panels, highlighting the following:

- (a) there has been a slight increase in adoption applications for 2018, and a significant increase in adoption matches. This includes both in-house and inter-agency adoptions;
- (b) inter-agency adoptions require fees to be paid so are more of a challenge to fund, and some agencies have recently increase their fees;
- (c) there has been a large increase in mainstream applications for fostering, whilst other authorities nationally are struggling to recruit;
- (d) the four panel Chairs and panel members all reported consistent improvements in the quality of reports presented to the panels, with 88% of reports considered outstanding or good which is an increase from the previous year;
- (e) as part of the government's regionalisation agenda a regional adoption agency will be set up soon. The panels will continue to be heard in Nottingham but will hear wider adoption cases.

It was suggested that Councillors could continue to sit on adoption panels for the regional agency for democratic accountability.

RESOLVED to note the activity of the fostering and adoption panels.

45 INSPECTION OUTCOME

Clive Chambers reported on the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of Nottingham City's Social Care Services from November 2018, highlighting the following:

- (a) the report judged all areas to require improvement, including the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers;
- (b) the report, however, acknowledges that a range of services have improved since the previous inspection and that there are areas of good practice across the service. Children are well placed with carers and the authority works well with high-risk children;
- (c) key suggested service improvements included the speed of progressing permanence and the availability of emergency placements when, for example, a child is taken into custody;
- (d) a high number of children were taken into custody over the inspection period, and their care is transferred to the local authority. These may require secure accommodation which can be difficult to find, particularly if a number are taken into custody simultaneously;
- (e) the authority's process for dealing with these children is being reviewed with the police, including new guidance and a tracker so that the authority is informed as quickly as possible so that arrangements can be made;

- (f) an improvement plan is being drawn up following the report and will be presented at the next Board meeting.

The report can be found online at the following link:

<https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50048229>

46 ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY

Audrey Taylor, Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption, introduced the report providing an overview of the permanency performance of the local authority, primarily focusing on adoption activity. The following information was highlighted:

- (a) In Nottingham City there are currently 93 children with adoption plans, 31 of whom are currently matched with adopters. There are also 333 children being supported by means of Special Guardianship Orders;
- (b) 37 children have been adopted so far in this financial year, with a further 14 due to be granted adoption orders by 31 March 2019;
- (c) the authority is currently home finding for 27 children, including seven sibling groups and a high number of 1 year olds;
- (d) 21 prospective adopters are currently being assessed, and the authority has 43 approved households of which 28 have children placed and 15 are awaiting a match. This includes 5 foster carers who wish to adopt;
- (e) this financial year the authority has made 50 applications to the Adoption Support Fund which offers support to adoptive families by enabling them to access bespoke therapeutic support for the child and adopters;
- (f) plans are underway to establish an East Midlands Regional Adoption Agency by April 2019. Staff currently in the adoption and post order team will move over to the new agency which will be hosted by Nottinghamshire County Council;
- (g) the Permanency Panel has been established which reviews proposed plans for permanency and ensures that proposed matches are viable and appropriate for prospective carers and children.

RESOLVED 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.

47 CHILDREN IN CARE SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS

Ian Hillier, Complaints Officer, introduced the report highlighting complaints made specifically by children in care in accordance with the statutory social care complaints procedure, and highlighted the following:

- (a) 24 complaints were received which was an increase from 11 in the previous reporting period. 23 of these 24 complaints were resolved at stage 1 of the

complaints procedure;

- (b) nearly all complaints were resolved within statutory timescale of 20 working days. Of those that were not, one was 1 day outside the timescale and one was 9 days;
- (c) the significant increase in complaints demonstrates that the children in care are finding it easier to make their voices heard through new methods such as MOMO which is an app that the young people can use to contact their social workers;
- (d) MOMO is available to all children in care. If they do not have a mobile phone then it is accessible through computers or handheld devices.

RESOLVED to continue to support the effective complaints handling of young people in care and understand the required duties of corporate parents in relation to addressing the concerns of young people in care.

48 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN IN CARE

Jasmin Howell, Acting Head of the Virtual School, introduced the report providing an update on the work of the Nottingham City Virtual School and details of attainment in the 2017-18 academic year. The following information was highlighted:

- (a) the majority of children in care were in schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted;
- (b) there was a slight drop in the school attendance rate of 1% from the previous year;
- (c) there were no permanent exclusions of children in care, but there were 139 fixed term exclusions which is a decrease from the year before. The reason recorded for the majority of these was 'other';
- (d) 68% of the authority's children have had an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP) completed in the last 6 months. 6% of children have a PEP that is out of date by over a year and 5% have not yet had a PEP completed. An electronic PEP is being developed which should increase completion rates and timescales;
- (e) a new process for the administration and distribution of Pupil Premium Plus was introduced at the start of the 2017-18 academic year, encouraging and supporting schools to apply for the funding;
- (f) the Virtual School now has the responsibility to provide support, advice and signposting for previously looked after children. A training course specific to these children has been developed for parents of adopted children and special guardians.

The following information was provided during the discussion which followed:

- (g) the completion rate for PEPs should be higher, but it would be almost impossible to achieve 100% for this. Some schools refuse to complete a PEP until the child has been on roll for some time. The electronic system should improve rates as they will be signed off more quickly;
- (h) some schools send children home early as an alternative to fixed period exclusion, and some teachers are unaware of the issues that children in care may have. There are designated teachers who are trained on these specific issues.

RESOLVED to

- (1) note and discuss the recent trends and current levels of educational attainment for Nottingham City's children in care in comparison to the performance of all children and children in care nationally;**
- (2) note the current work and interventions of the Virtual School to promote and support the educational achievement of Nottingham City looked after children and previously looked after children.**

49 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

This item was withdrawn from the agenda as Children in Care Council members were unable to attend.

50 FORWARD PLANNER

The forward planner was noted.