

**CORPORATE PARENTING SPECIALIST
ADVISORY GROUP
Wednesday 26th October 2016**

PRESENT –

Cllrs McFall (Chair), Liddle, Bateson, D Foster, K Foster, Gunn, Davies, Harling and Gee.

Also Present –

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| Sheila Morris | Designated Nurse – Looked After Children |
| Karen Barrick | Head of Service – Permanence |
| Charlotte Hesketh | Virtual Head & Assessment Office – Looked After Children |
| Susan Clarke | Head of Safeguarding, Clinical Commissioning Group |
| Andrew Hutchinson | Governance and Liaison Team Leader |
| Ben Aspinall | Democratic Services Manager |
| Rebekah Mottershead | Dedicated Group Support Officer |

RESOLUTIONS

18. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group. Apologies were received from Cllrs Entwistle, Kay, McGurk, McKinley, Julie Slater, Smith, Taylor and Whittle and Robert Arrowsmith, Jessica Byrne, Linda Clegg, Patricia Harrison and Christy Walsh.

RESOLVED –

That the apologies be noted.

19. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 17th August 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group held on the 17th August 2016 be agreed as a correct record.

20. Looked After Children's Governors; An Update

The Chair welcomed Andrew Hutchinson, the Governance and Liaison Team Leader to the meeting and invited him to provide the Group with an update on the work of Looked After Children's Governors in the borough.

The Group was advised that it was statutory for schools to have a designated Looked After Teacher. It was noted that many schools in the borough now also had a designated governor. The virtual head reported that there was a model policy put in place for Children in Our Care for Governing Bodies to implement and that all community schools had adopted this policy, and some faith, free and academy school also had, but not all. It was noted that there would be further works completed

with Free Schools and Academies to try to increase the take up of looked after governors.

It was noted that the designated governors would liaise with the designated teachers and report back to their full governing bodies. Members felt that it would be helpful to receive feedback on the work of these governors. Andrew advised that the information collated for the governing body was not something which the Council could specifically request.

It was noted that there were many training courses which governors could attend. Members suggested that all governors be encouraged to participate. It was also noted that over the last 2-3 years, a termly update was sent to governing bodies to remind them regularly about the courses.

The Group suggested that information about training courses be included within the newsletter that was distributed to all schools from the Director of Children's Services.

Members questioned if the educational information, resources and wellbeing of the Looked after Children was being monitored. It was noted that the Virtual Headteacher received a large amount of information via the Personal Education Plans (PEPS), but this was predominantly educational information, and there were also checks completed by Ofsted. Members heard that social services would also monitor the wellbeing of Children in Our Care.

Members noted that there were differences in provision for Looked After Children in school, but since the introduction of the Virtual Headteacher post, things had begun to improve.

The Virtual Headteacher advised the Group that each Looked After Child had a PEP which was closely monitored. It was reported that the PEP is a statutory document which was audited so the Council would look at any issues within the document. Members were informed that Pupil Premium was also linked to the PEP and that if the process was not completed properly then schools would not receive funding.

The Group suggested that an evaluation or feedback report around the child's wellbeing from the Looked After Children's Governor be included within the PEP. The Virtual Headteacher advised that this was something that could be looked into when the PEPs were next up for review.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Governance and Liaison Team Leader and the Virtual Headteacher be thanked for their attendance and information
2. That the Director of Children's Services include information about upcoming governor training within their newsletter to schools
3. That changes to the Personal Education Plans to include information on the child's wellbeing be explored by the Executive Member for Children's Services, the Director of Children's Services and the Virtual Headteacher

21. Educational attainment of Children in Our Care

The Chair welcomed the Virtual Headteacher to the meeting and invited her to provide the Group with an overview of the results attained by Children in Our Care.

The Group was informed that recent changes to grading guidelines meant that it was difficult to compare the data to other years. The Virtual Headteacher took the Group through an update report on the attainment and progress data for Children in our Care.

It was reported that for Key Stage 1;

- We had 21 young children in care who formed the KS1 cohort in 2016, 13 (62%) attended primary schools in Blackburn with Darwen. Of these 3 were dis-applied from the assessment in reading and writing and 4 dis-applied in maths. 1 school (out of borough) has failed to provide the results for a child despite repeated requests therefore the child has not been included in the results. 4 children in the group (20%) had either a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education Health and Care Plan that was reflected in the outcomes achieved. Also included is one asylum seeker who had only been in the country a few months.
- Data to compare BwD CIOC with their CIOC peers nationally is not yet available.
- Maths has shown to be the weakest subject area for our CIOC when compared to all children in BwD.
- Reading has shown to be the strongest area for our CIOC when compared to all children in BwD. The Virtual School has worked to promote reading through the Letterbox initiative introduced in this academic year, whilst we cannot say definitively that this has directly impacted it may have contributed to the relative strength in this area at both KS1 and KS2.

For Key Stage 2;

- We had 24 children in care who formed the KS2 cohort in 2016, 23 of these sat the end of Key Stage tests with 1 child being dis-applied from the tests. 67% of the cohort were educated in BwD primary schools at the time of taking the tests. 4 children in the group (18%) had either a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education Health and Care Plan that was reflected in the outcomes achieved.
- Data to compare BwD CIOC with their CIOC peers nationally is not yet available.
- Maths has shown to be the weakest subject area for our CIOC when compared to all children in BwD.
- Reading has shown to be the strongest area for our CIOC when compared to all children in BwD. The Virtual School has worked to promote reading through the Letterbox initiative introduced in this academic year, whilst we cannot say definitively that this has directly impacted it may have contributed to the relative strength in this area at both KS1 and KS2.

For Key Stage 4;

At the time of taking their GCSE examinations, 2 (9%) young people in care achieved at least 5 A*- C GCSEs, including Maths and English. One of these young people achieved 8 GCSEs at Grade C and above and another achieved 6.

Members heard that there was a new scheme called the letterbox initiative, through which young people were posted books to read. It was noted that this had proven to be popular so far and would hopefully result in the reading outcomes continuing to rise.

The Group discussed the levels attained by young people in Care and agreed that they were doing very well to achieve their outcomes.

RESOLVED –

That the Virtual School Head and Assessment Officer be thanked for her attendance and the report be noted.

22. Regulation 44 and Children's Home Inspection reports

The Chair welcomed the Head of Service- Permanence to the meeting and invited her to provide the Group with an overview of the Regulation 44 and Children's Home Inspection reports.

The Group was reminded that Children's Homes Regulations and Quality Standards stipulated that Regulation 44 visits must be undertaken by an independent person. It was noted that Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council employed a small team of independent reporting officers to carry out inspections.

The Group heard that the independent person's report could recommend actions that the registered person could take in relation to the children's home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.

It was noted that Ofsted continually raised the bar with their inspection criteria, so there were now people who were independent to those visits and covered everything around children's homes such as, talk to parents of the Children in Care, staff at the Children's homes, measure paperwork against standards and report back.

The Head of Service- Permanence outlined the findings from the last visits undertaken to Cherry Tree and Whalley New Road children's homes including the positive and recommendations noted.

It was reported that overall the new arrangements were working well and were becoming embedded into the monthly routine of each home. The quality of feedback provided to the homes in the comprehensive reports produced was valued by the managers and acted upon to improve practice.

RESOLVED –

That the Head of Service- Permanence be thanked for her report.

23. Monitoring Report; Children in Our Care

The Group received the latest monitoring reports for Children in Care from the Head of Service- Permanence.

The presentation outlined the latest numbers of children in Care, locality of placements and age range. It was noted that there were more children entering Care than leaving at the moment, which placed additional budget pressures on the department.

It was reported that children were predominately placed in-house foster care but there was a growing number of children who were being placed with parents by the courts on a care order.

It was reported that Blackburn with Darwen were currently the best in the country at adoption and that only 14% of children return to their parents which demonstrated that the right children were being taken into care.

RESOLVED –

The Head of Service – Permanence be thanked for her report

Signed.....

Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....