

**CORPORATE PARENTING
SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUP
18TH DECEMBER 2017**

PRESENT – Cllrs Gunn (Chair), Pearson, Whittle, Kay, Surve, Casey, D Smith, Bateson, Daley, Ali, Hussain and Taylor.

Also Present –

Deborah Benmore	Fostering Team Manager
Mike Dixon	Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Manager
Sharon Burns	Chair of Foster Carers Association
Samantha Briggs	Secretary of Foster Carers Association
Gavin Redhead	Participation Officer/Voice
Linda Clegg	Director of Children's Services
Cerys Bedford	Adults and Safeguarding Business Partner
Robert Arrowsmith	Head of Policy Performance and Commissioning (Children's Services)
Phil Llewellyn	Governance and Democratic Services Manager
Firoza Hafeji	Governance Officer

RESOLUTIONS

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group. Apologies were received from Cllrs Shorrocks, McFall, A.Patel, Khan, McGurk, Little and Davies. Apologies were also received from Joanne Siddle, Jessica Byrne and Patricia Harrison.

RESOLVED –

That the apologies be noted.

2. Foster Carers Service

The Chair welcomed Foster Carers, Sharon Burns and Samantha Briggs, to provide Members with a verbal update on Foster Carers Service.

Members were provided with case studies and an overview of the challenges faced by Foster Carers especially as teenagers struggled with changes and the separation from younger siblings. It was highlighted that foster carers are at a high risk of allegations so it is vital that all foster carers kept a log book.

The foster carer shared a poem with the Group followed by a task to identify the emotions and feelings of a foster child. It was noted that social workers held a vital role as a supervisor for the foster carers whilst also supporting the foster child.

The Group heard that the Looked after Child review was carried out by an Individual Reviewing Officer (IRO) and can be held at an alternative place agreed by the foster

child and the IRO. This is to ensure that the foster child had an appropriate review meeting, even if they were not feeling up to it.

The Director of Children Services shared positive feedback received from the Children's Ofsted inspection and highlighted that the "experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence" was rated "Good".

The Group were provided with rewards and challenges of a day in the life as a Foster Carer which highlighted that the foster carers were faced with various challenges on a daily basis.

RESOLVED –

That the foster carers be thanked for the verbal update on Foster Carer's Service.

3. Foster Carers Recruitment

The Chair welcomed Mike Dixon, the new Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Manager and Deborah Benmore, Fostering Team Manager.

The Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Manager gave a verbal update on Foster Carer recruitment and explained that events were planned to help promote and recruit new foster carers. It was highlighted that the Local Authority were seeking for Foster Carers to support large sibling groups.

The Group heard that the Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Manager worked collaboratively with other authorities whilst upgrading the Foster Carers website to ensure it was robust and user friendly. The new website would hold case studies and significant information to support foster carers.

Various marketing strategies were shared with the Group which helped to promote foster carers. The Group suggested using the local radio station as it had been a positive resource in the previous years.

RESOLVED –

That the Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Manager and Fostering Team Manager be thanked for the verbal update on Foster Carer recruitment.

4. Agency Commissioned Placements

The Chair welcomed Cerys Bedford, Adults and Safeguarding Business Partner and Robert Arrowsmith, Head of Policy Performance and Commissioning and introductions were made.

The Group were provided with a presentation on Children's Commissioned Placements. It was noted that there were two types of commissioned placements, Independent Fostering Agencies and Residential placements.

The Group were informed that currently Blackburn with Darwen has just under 400 children and young people in our care. The commissioned placements budget supports the placements of 80 of these children:

- **47** children and young people are with agency foster placements
- **3** placements have been commissioned as specific supported accommodation for young people aged 16
- **2** placements are commissioned as concurrent placements for young children who are in court proceedings with a place for adoption
- **1** mother and baby has been commissioned following court direction
- The remaining **27** placements are commissioned residential placements

The cost of young people currently in Residential provision was shared with the Group as:

- 1 young person residing in secure provision costing above £5500 per week.
- 19 young people residing in general residential of which seven costing above £3500 per week excluding the education funding.
- 6 young people residing in a disability provision of which three costing above £3500 per week.
- 1 young person residing in specialist residential school costing above £3500 per week however 50:50 funded by health.

In response to questions raised by the Group it was highlighted that the reason for young people being in agency foster placements was due to the shortage of places available in the Local Authority. Also there were limited skilled Foster Carers for older foster children who have acute needs and their needs are not met in a traditional home environment.

The Group were provided with various case studies to identify why the young people were accessing placements elsewhere rather than in our Local Authority. It was noted that the scale of the young person's needs was thoroughly assessed prior to placing them in a commissioned placement as it cost the Local Authority a substantial amount of money.

It was reported that early intervention is beneficial for the children and young people but due to budget restraints it was proving to be difficult.

It was noted that historically the North West has been a prime area to set up a residential home due to:

- Low price of housing
- Good transport infrastructure
- Three large authorities close by
- Ability to open homes in rural areas

Information on current trends and issues were also shared with the Group.

RESOLVED –

That the Adults and Safeguarding Business Partner and Head of Policy Performance and Commissioning be thanked for the presentation on Children's Commissioned Placements.

5. **Monitoring Report; Children in Our Care**

The Head of Policy Performance and Commissioning provided a presentation on the latest monitoring reports for Children in Care.

The presentation identified that the number of Children in Care had increased since the last report and currently there were 398 Children in Care with more males (56%) than females (44%) in care, 77% of whom were defined as White British.

It was noted that the number of babies and teenagers entering care had increased with a high proportionate of Children in Care being placed in a home environment.

RESOLVED –

That the Head of Policy Performance and Commissioning be thanked for the presentation.

Signed.....

Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....