

CORPORATE PARENTING SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUP

Monday, 27 January 2020

PRESENT – Councillors; Gunn (In the Chair); Bateson; Davies; Floyd; Gee; Kay; McGurk; Oates and Taylor.

OFFICERS –

Alyson Hanson – Interim Head of Permanence

Care Leaver

Caroline Waldron – Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and LAC

Charlotte Hesketh – LAC Virtual Head & Assessment Officer

Jaffer Hussain – Participation Officer

Jayne Ivory – Director of Children's Services

Paula Quinn – FCA Fundraising Manager

RESOLUTIONS

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillors; Afzal, Akhtar (H), Batan, Brookfield, Khan (M), Liddle, McFall, Riley, Slater (Ju), Smith (D), Smith (J), and Whittle. Apologies were also received from Jo Siddall and Sam Briggs.

2 Declarations of Interest in items on this Agenda

There were no Declarations of Interest received.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2019

RESOLVED - The Minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 14th October 2019 were approved as a correct record and were duly signed by the Chair.

4 Corporate Parenting Dashboard and Highlight Report

The Group was presented with an update on the latest monitoring report of Children in Our Care as of the 23rd January 2020 and heard that the number of children in care was 398. Of those, 45% were female and 55% were male.

Members noted that the total number of children entering care in 2019 was 155 and the number of children leaving care in 2019 was 144. The Group heard that it was predominantly children under the age of 6 years coming in to care, with 46% of children entering care were aged 0 to 2 years, 20% were aged 3 to 6 years, 11% aged 7 to 10 years, 17% aged 11 to 15 years and 6% aged 16+. It was highlighted that the figures were coming down albeit not hugely.

The Group was updated on the placements of Children in Our Care which highlighted that a high proportion of children were placed in the following; in-

house Foster Placements (131), Friends and Family (66), Placed with Parents (63) and Foster Placements with an agency (61).

RESOLVED – That the updated be noted by the Group.

5 Placement Stability Audit Report

A presentation was given to the Group on Placement Stability, focusing on children and young people who had 3 or more placements and young people who had been in care for more than 2 ½ years who had been in the same placement for two years or more.

The Group heard that 63 children and young people were listed in September 2019 as having had 3 or more placements. Within those 63 children it was noted that;

- 24 of those were young people aged 13 years and over. 9 of those young people had experiences of long term foster care (over 2 years in the same placement) and once this placement had been disrupted they were unable to resettle
- 19 Children listed as having had 3 or more placements were babies and children under 5 years old
- There were 6 examples of the court ordering parent / child placements which broke down
- 5 placements in foster care had been disrupted as a result of allegations against the Foster Carer, the majority of which were later found to be unsubstantiated
- There were 4 examples of short breaks to cover carer holidays that counted as placements which could take a child up to 3+ placements

The Group heard that in November 2019 there was a total of 402 children in our care and that 182 (45%) of those children had been in care for more than 2.5 years and 61 (33%) of those children had not been in a placement for 2 years or more.

Further, the Group was informed that of those 61 children;

- 11 young people were aged 16/17 and had moved to some form of supported accommodation which for some was a positive move
- 2 children had stepped down from residential to foster care because of the positive progress they had made
- 14 young people had moved from foster care to residential care. This was a group of adolescents with complex needs presenting behaviours that foster carers had found to be too difficult to manage
- 13 children and young people had experienced changes of foster placement but remained in foster care
- 1 young person who experienced foster care, residential care, secure accommodation was currently in custody

- 1 young person who experienced multiple foster placements, residential care, secure accommodation was currently in hospital

The Group noted that disruption meetings were held whenever a long term matched foster placements disrupted and in 2019 there 12 cases that were referred and 8 cases that required disruption meetings. It was also noted that 3 out of those 8 cases were independent agency placements.

The Group heard that identifying long term placements for young people had been compromised by a shortage of foster carers with the skills to manage adolescents. Revive support was involved in 4 out of the 8 cases but in some there was a lack of engagement by foster carers and a delay in asking for support, waiting until the placement had reached crisis point.

In conclusion, the Group heard that in order to maintain adolescent placements, the following would take place;

- Review of Revive
- Develop a support hub
- Prioritise long term matching cases
- Independence training for young people such as help with budgets, cooking, washing
- Clarify IFA (Independent Fostering Agents) support – additional support when a placement becomes unstable

With regards to the increased numbers of babies and very young children coming into care, the Group heard that it had been recognised there was more work needed to be done pre-birth.

RESOLVED – That the Group note the detailed presentation.

6 Report of Virtual School including: Rate of Completion of PEPS to date, Attainment of Cared for Children, Attendance and Numbers of FTE, part time timetables for Cared for Children

The Group received a report from Charlotte Hesketh on the Virtual School and heard that for the 2018/2019 academic year, the average completion rate for PEPS was 84%. Since then, the Virtual School had implemented a new system for PEPS, and it was confirmed that the completion rate for the autumn term 2019/2020 was 97%, which was good progress.

Attendance was also monitored by the Virtual School on a daily basis and the Group were informed that the average attendance rate for the autumn term 2019/2020 was 94%, which was a credit to foster carers.

It was reported that there had been no permanent exclusions for children in our care in the 2018/2019 academic year or 2019/2020 to date. In 2018/2019, 21 young people received fixed term exclusions for a total of 135 days and in the 2019/2020 autumn term, a total of 16 young people received fixed term exclusions for a total of 65 days. All were of secondary school age. It was noted that the reasons for exclusions were physical assault, aggression, persistent disruptive behaviour, verbal abuse and damage.

Attainment figures were provided to the Group but it was noted that the results were currently provisional. Statistical first release would become available in March 2020 via the DfE, which would then allow for up to date figures to be reported back to the group.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and that the item come back to a future meeting once up to date attainment figures were available.

7 Health Assessments Audit Update

Caroline Waldron provided the Group with an update on the recent Health Audit which took place on the 16th January 2020.

The audit involved Named Nurse for Looked After Children Pennine and Central Lancs, Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and LAC, Head of Permanence and Service Lead responsible for Children in Our Care.

Twelve cases were audited including a cross section of interim and full care orders, care orders at home, children in out of Borough placements and in long term foster care – connected persons, in-house and IFA (Independent Fostering Agency).

The purpose of the audit was to investigate timeliness of initial health assessments, quality of assessment, quality of partnership work and the follow up to the identification of health needs.

The findings had yet to be analysed however the initial findings were as follows;

- It was evident that children's health needs were consistently identified, discussed fully in LAC (Looked After Child) reviews and were met by carers and relevant agencies
- There were a number of process issues relating to notifications, information sharing, invitations to meetings and the sharing of minutes
- It could be difficult to pick up Revive involvement from protocol
- The completion of SDQ's (Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire) was inconsistent
- Performance was good for children in foster care placements
- Performance was less good for children placed at home with parents

An action plan addressing the issues relating to systems and processes would be formulated and agreed once the findings had been confirmed and analysed.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted and that the action plan be brought to a future meeting once the findings had been confirmed and analysed.

8 Assurance Overview Regarding Care for Children Placed in Out of Borough Placements

RESOLVED – That the item be deferred to the next meeting to allow the item the time needed to discuss in full.

9 Any Other Business

The Group heard from Jaffer Hussain, Participation Officer, about two forthcoming events;

- VOICE – this would be up and running on Thursday, 6th February 2020 at Youthzone. Communication had been sent out a month prior but Jaffer would re-send to remind people.
- Champions Network Meeting – This would be the second meeting, taking place on Wednesday 29th January 2020, between 10am – 4pm at Witton Park. It would be a good opportunity to meet the Champions.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed