

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday 11 November 2015 in Committee Room 4, City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 1630
Adjourned 1810

PRESENT – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
M Pollard	Engel	Leeming
	Tait	
	Thirkill	

Co-opted Members: Chair of the Children in Care Council
L Donohue – Bradford Achievement Service

Apologies: Councillor Berry (Portfolio Holder)
N O'Neill (Bradford NHS)

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

15. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency, Councillor Leeming disclosed that she was a foster carer for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

16. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

17. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services submitted a report (**Document "E"**) which provided the Panel with a summary of attainment statistics for looked after pupils for the academic year 2014/2015, using data as at October 2015. The report also included information on the use of Pupil Premium Plus funding (PPP) to support looked after children. A breakdown of the figures in respect of ethnicity and location, to constituency level, was given.



In presenting the report and answering questions from Members the following points were made:

- Schools no longer tracked pupils' levels of progress/attainment in the same way. This data had been used in the past to assess the impact of PPP but the use of differing approaches meant that this was now proving difficult; work was currently being undertaken to try and resolve this issue.
- The figures were for children and young people who had been in care for a year or more.
- When placing looked after young people in school account was always taken of the school's Ofsted report. Sometimes it was not possible to avoid placement in a school assessed as 'requiring improvement' or it may be that a school became graded as such whilst the young person was in attendance. The percentage of looked after children attending schools graded as 'outstanding' or 'good' was too low.
- 75% of Pupil Premium Plus funding was paid directly to the school and 25% was now retained for the Virtual School (VS). This was a recent change and it was believed that the impact achieved per pound of spending would be greater; this issue could be further discussed in the next report to the Panel. This retention of funding allowed the VS to react to and focus on particular situations such as pupils that were newly looked after, short term placements, pupils with particularly high needs and children leaving care.
- Attendance was a very high priority and this was something that was carefully monitored. Achievement in English and Maths and behaviour were also key issues.
- A comprehensive review of residential homes was currently in progress; one of the aims of which would be to better place young people with those of similar needs. It was anticipated that this would have an impact on attendance.
- In terms of placement type, the performance of those young people in a long term fostering arrangement was stronger than others and the results achieved by those in residential units were a concern. Specific work was being undertaken to try and address this.

Comments were made by Members and Co-opted Members:

- It would be useful to have a record of outcomes at age 5; children in care entered education, on average, 19 months behind their peers and this data would assist in assessing whether they were catching up and by what point.
- It would also be useful to have a comparison with children who were not looked after.
- What was best for the individual child had to be carefully considered. If they were settled and happy and their achievement was not suffering in a school ranked as 'inadequate' it would be difficult to decide whether or not they should move. The Interim Head of the VS suggested that it was unlikely that a young person would be moved in these circumstances.
- Attendance could be a difficult issue to address particularly in the residential unit setting.
- It would be useful to have information in future reports on why a number of young people had not been entered for GCSEs.

It was noted that a more comprehensive report, specifically looking at education outcomes, was to be submitted to the Panel in March 2016.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Panel supports the continued deployment of Pupil Premium Plus by the Virtual School in response to looked after pupils' needs, irrespective of location or heritage, and to ensure an impact across the District.
- (2) That the Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services be requested to ensure that the Virtual School has the necessary resources to address the changing nature of the looked after cohort in terms of staffing, expertise and resources.
- (3) That a further report be submitted to the March meeting of the Panel and that this include:
 - The Department for Education data.
 - Comparison with the national figures and those for local authorities within the Yorkshire and Humber region.
 - Comparison with young people who are not looked after.
 - The reasons why some young people are not entered for GCSEs.
 - Outcomes at 5, 7, 11 and 16.
 - An assessment of whether looked after children are catching up with their peers and, if so, by what point in their education.

ACTION: *Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Service
Head of the Virtual School*

18. VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Previous references: Minutes 22 and 30 (2014/15)

A report was presented by the Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services (**Document "F"**) in respect of the work of the authority's 'Virtual School' (VS), which aimed to promote achievement, raise attainment and ensure equality of opportunity to enhance the life chances of all looked after children.

The report explained that the Virtual School had expanded to ensure that the Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) funding had an impact on the progress and attainment of the district's looked after children and young people. It included information on the appointments made to date, the future intentions and, in response to a request from this Panel, particular reference was made to the work being undertaken with colleagues from care and education services to improve the attendance of young people from residential care settings.

In presenting the report and answering questions from Members the following points were highlighted:

- VS Staff attended the first Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting of the year at each school to ensure that the correct process was being followed.
- The increase in VS staffing had allowed for work to be undertaken in addressing the quality of PEPs.

- The PEP had to be completed by a qualified teacher. Templates were sent to the school prior to a review so that draft targets could be prepared beforehand. Once it became a live document the VS would monitor to assess whether it was being delivered and how this reflected in outcomes.
- Training was provided for all Social Workers to address any issues within a young person's PEP such as unspecific targets.
- The VS was in the process of appointing a number of 'Associates'; people with outstanding records in education who would be called upon to deal with challenging situations, as and when necessary, providing a quick response.
- The total funding for PPP was £1.3 million of which ¼ was retained by the VS. An assessment of the funding allocated to date would be undertaken in January 2016. It was early days in terms of assessing whether the allocation split was appropriate however the use of the funding in this way meant that it could be used in a more proactive and focused way.
- Although schools had some discretion in the allocation of funding between individual children they also had other sources of funding that they could and should utilize, for example to encourage and assist young people who were gifted and talented.

Members welcomed the report. Thanks were expressed to the Interim VS Head for the work he had undertaken in the district; it was considered that progress had been made.

Resolved –

That a further report to update Members on the work of the Virtual School be submitted to the Panel in 2016/17.

ACTION: Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Service

19. COMPLAINTS RAISED BY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A report was submitted by the Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Services (**Document "G"**) which summarised the issues raised by looked after children who had used the statutory complaints procedures to seek redress for their concerns. The report related to complaints in the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

It was noted that:

- There had been fewer complaints than in 2014/15.
- The percentage of those in care who had complained was consistent at 1%.
- The average complainant was a looked after male between the ages of 15 and 18 who was subject to a care order and had no disabilities. This was the same as the previous year.
- There had been a significant reduction in the number of complaints about staff.
- Most complainants had chosen to complain using traditional methods; letter, face to face, by telephone or via the complaints leaflet. No one had chosen to use online facilities. However an app had now been developed which included a complaints section should a young person wish to use it.
- There had been no referrals from the advocacy service.

- Six complaints had been closed at Stage 1, half had been partially upheld and one fully upheld. None had escalated to Stage 2 or 3. The one which had been fully upheld was a historical complaint.
- The average time to respond to a complaint had improved from 2014/15.
- Actions for improvement had been identified as a result of the complaints.
- A lower number of compliments had been received from young people than in the previous year.
- The aim was to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage. 92 complaints had been prevented during this period by dealing with the issues promptly.

The Children in Care Council (CICC) representatives said that:

- From the information they had received the previous advocacy service had been more accessible than the current provision.
- Young people may choose not to complain due to a belief that their concerns would not be taken seriously.
- There could be a lack of awareness of the complaints procedure.

The Assistant Director:

- Noted that work had been undertaken with the CICC on the issue and it was hoped that the newly developed app would make the process easier and also raise awareness.
- Explained that training had been provided for all staff on complaints and leaflets were available in all Council buildings and had been made available to all the residential homes.
- Gave an undertaking to check whether relevant information was included within the initial information pack given to young people.
- Took on board that a number of young people had raised issues in respect of the 'exit interview' process. The interviews were undertaken by the people who had provided the care and it was considered that young people would be more likely to say something positive rather than negative at this point and in that circumstance.

Members noted that this was one of the issues that was considered during Regulation 44 visits to residential homes.

Resolved –

That the Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services be requested to review the exit interview process carried out by the Leaving Care Service, including undertaking consultation with the Children in Care Council, and to submit a report to the first meeting of the Panel in 2016/17.

ACTION: Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Service

20. **WORK PLAN 2015/16**

Resolved –

(1) That the following amendments be made to the Panel's Work Plan for 2015/16:

(i) Residential Care Review be moved to the April 2016 meeting.

- (ii) **A further report on the Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children be included on the agenda for the March 2016 meeting.**
- (2) **That the following be noted for inclusion on the Panel's Work Plan for 2016/17 in due course:**
 - (i) **Review of Exit Interview Process**
 - (ii) **Update on the Work of the Virtual School**

ACTION: *Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Service
City Solicitor*

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.

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THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER