

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday 13 January 2016 in Committee Room 1, City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 1630
Adjourned 1800

PRESENT – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
D Smith	Engel	Leeming
	Tait	
	Thirkill	

Co-opted Members: Chair of the Children in Care Council
L Donohue – Bradford Achievement Service
N O'Neill (Bradford NHS)

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

21. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

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

In the interest of transparency, Councillor Tait disclosed that she had agreed to act as a referee for an individual who was applying to become a foster carer.

22. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2015 be signed as a correct record.

23. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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



24. ADOPTION AND FOSTERING OF SIBLING GROUPS

Previous references: Minutes 7 and 18 (2014/15)

The Assistant Director (Children's Specialist Services) presented a report (**Document "I"**) which updated Members on the work being undertaken in respect of the development of a policy on the adoption and fostering of sibling groups in the care of the Local Authority, further to the Panel's request at the meeting held on 14 January 2015.

The Assistant Director explained that:

- Work had been undertaken in relation to the placement stability of Looked After Children (LAC) and this had confirmed the importance of the establishment of a clear policy on the placement of siblings.
- A Working Group was due to report on the effectiveness of the new approach taken in the assessment of sibling groups in February and, further to this, the aim was to draft the policy document by April.

She responded to Members questions:

- There was currently no specific policy but there was a clear understanding that, wherever possible, siblings would be placed together and this would happen unless there was a good reason not to do so. Work was ongoing to achieve a more consistent approach to the assessment of sibling groups. If siblings were not placed together there had to be a clear, evidence based decision to show why this had been considered appropriate.
- Some families were approved specifically for the fostering and adoption of sibling groups.
- Foster carers were sometimes able to accept sibling placements even if they had to go over their approved numbers.
- Stability was a very complex area, with a number of factors making a contribution to the success or otherwise of a placement. However the number of placements that had broken down within the audited cohort that were part of a sibling group indicated that this was an important issue to address.
- In the experience of officers, foster carers were always willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to try and accommodate children if possible.
- If a foster carer had the necessary space there was no limit on the number of siblings that they could take. Normally there was a limit of 3 children (from separate family groups).

Members made the following comments:

- The final report to the Panel should include numbers of families and siblings and also the relationships between the siblings.
- The thoughtful consideration of the development of the policy was welcomed.
- It had to be recognised that the needs of different siblings within a group could be contradictory.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress made in respect of the development of a Policy on the Adoption and Fostering of Sibling Groups be noted.**

- (2) That the Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services be requested to present the policy document to the Panel for consideration, once drafted, together with information in respect of the numbers of sibling groups and the numbers and relationships of the siblings therein in order to assist Members in understanding the complexity of the issues in placement.
- (3) That a further report be submitted to the Panel six months after implementation of the policy.

ACTION: *Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services*

25. EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Previous references: Minutes 14 (2013/14), 6 and 28 (2014/15)

Members recalled that the Panel had received reports, in September 2014 and April 2015, in relation to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for Looked After Children (LAC).

In response to the requests made by the Panel at that time, a report was submitted by the Assistant Director (Children’s Specialist Services) (**Document “J”**) which provided an update on the work being undertaken in this area.

The Assistant Director explained that;

- Since the last meeting, some work had been undertaken with CAMHS to try and develop a specific service for Looked After Children in the district. However, this had now been overtaken by events with the production of the document ‘Future in Mind – Promoting, Protecting and Improving our Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Well Being’, which was the final report produced by the National Children and Young People’s Mental Health Taskforce. This document took a transformational approach to the future delivery of emotional wellbeing and mental health services for children and young people.
- The ‘Future in Mind’ initiative would bring additional finance into the district to help deliver these services.
- Work was now being undertaken towards the establishment of a dedicated LAC CAMHS team which would include out of hours provision and dedicated psychological support.

The Co-opted Member representing Bradford NHS explained that:

- Bradford’s Transformation Plan had been submitted for approval and would bring £5.5million of funding into the district over the next five years. By the end of that period there needed to be sustainable provision in place.
- There were eight core elements that the Transformation Plan had to achieve; one of which was specific provision for LAC.
- Although no details were available at this point, there would be a dedicated team for LAC. There was currently some dedicated help but it was recognised this was not enough and it was not sufficiently flexible.
- Young people’s views would be fed into the project.

- The aim was to achieve a 'joined-up' service that would provide better outcomes.
- There was a need to identify issues at an earlier stage. Staff would be helped to do so, thus assisting in the delivery of quick assessments and provision of support at an appropriate level.
- Lessons were being taken from the approach adopted in respect of adult mental health provision.
- The specialist service for LAC was only one part of a more universal provision which would include a multi-agency single point of access.
- There may be the potential to tie in with 'Journey to Excellence' (which was the next item for consideration).

The Assistant Director further stated that:

- A key meeting would take place on 22 January 2016 to try and establish the format of the dedicated CAMHS LAC team model.
- The project was in the early stages but a lot of background work had been undertaken and things were moving fairly fast.

Members commented that young people were not getting the input they needed at the present time; it was hoped that this initiative would help both the young people and the staff supporting them.

In response to questions from the Children in Care Council (CICC) representative, the Assistant Director said that:

- In respect of input from young people; the issue had been taken to the CICC twice and members of the council had been asked to feed back views from young people, particularly those in residential homes. Points raised included that having one trusted person to speak to was a preferred option and that they did not want to be taken out of school for appointments.
- On-line counselling may also be an option

A CICC representative commented that text and/or telephone calls were a better format than meetings. Her view was that young people would be more likely to reach out to the service if they were able to have a chat about issues as and when rather than a formal appointment. The waiting times had been quite long in the past. Young people, particularly those in residential care, wanted to be asked how they felt.

In response to further questions the Assistant Director said that:

- Training would be provided across the board, including for foster carers and adoptive parents.
- The Transformation Plan had been presented to the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board and Bradford Health and Care Commissioners Board.

Resolved –

- (1) That the contents of Document "J" be noted and welcomed.**
- (2) That the Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Services be asked to submit progress reports to the Panel, in due course, to include information on the allocation of the available finance both in the initial stages and longer term.**

ACTION: Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Services

26. JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE

The Assistant Director (Children's Specialist Services) gave a presentation on 'Journey to Excellence'; a multi-agency change programme led by Children's Services which aimed to transform the approach to family support and the provision of care for children and young people within the Bradford District.

The following points were highlighted:

- The background to this programme was increasing numbers of young people and those needing care and support.
- The programme involved four main areas:
 - Co-ordinated Early Intervention; to help avoid young people becoming looked after or requiring a social worker and reducing the demand for specialist services
 - Re-focusing placement provision; including the implementation of a shared model of care to improve clarity and consistency across agencies; the introduction of smaller residential homes with no more than 5 occupants to try and ensure equality of care and relationships and the recruitment of more foster carers for teenagers.
 - Provision of a more rapid and effective response in crisis situations.
 - More integrated work at an earlier stage with young people with disabilities to assist them in preparing for adulthood.
- Introduction of the 'Signs of Safety' model. This was an assessment and planning tool for use by all agencies which used three fundamental questions to give a clear focus for moving forward. It included tools to work with children and young people to ensure that their voice was at the forefront of plans.
- The Children's Society's 'Good Childhood Index', which set out the elements which contributed towards a good childhood, tied in with the Council's Pledge.
- The programme had been discussed at the Children in Care Council (CICC). Sessions would also be undertaken with young people in residential homes, and those who had already left care, to establish their views. Information would also be gathered from the 'Viewpoint' online consultation resource.
- Work would be undertaken on further developing the links between this Panel and the CICC. Three options were being considered for future joint working; use of the 'Hear by Right' participation tool to explore issues together; joint scrutiny of a chosen priority area; or peer review by a neighbouring local authority.

The Assistant Director responded to questions from Members:

- The Signs of Safety model had originally been developed in Australia and was currently used by 50 other local authorities. Briefings on Signs of Safety would take place on 27 and 28 January and were open to anyone who wished to attend. Information would be sent to Members after the meeting.

Members made the following comments:

- Earlier support for young people with disabilities to assist them in becoming independent was welcomed.
- The contribution from the young people was very powerful and it was good to have this input. The CICC reps were thanked for their participation in the meeting.

Members discussed the options put forward for developing links between the Panel and the CICC noting that peer review could be useful in terms of learning from others' experience however the value lay in the views of young people not a peer's opinion of our practices.

The CICC representatives expressed the view that the Joint Scrutiny option was a good idea. It would also be interesting to hear what young people from different authorities had to say about their experiences; if something had worked well for young people in another area it would also work for young people in Bradford. In some cases seeing the provision in other authorities could make you have a greater appreciation for your own.

The Assistant Director said that peer review could be very helpful and this would be undertaken in a supportive, non-critical manner led by young people.

Resolved –

That the Assistant Director, Children’s Specialist Services be asked to further develop the links between Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Children in Care Council by looking into the possibility of undertaking:

- (i) joint scrutiny of particular priorities**
- (ii) a peer review alongside another local authority,**

in order to establish how the authority is performing in its role as corporate parent in terms of the participation of looked after children and young people.

ACTION: Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services

27. WORK PLAN 2015/16

The Panel’s work plan for 2015/16 was submitted (**Document “K”**) for Member’s consideration.

Resolved –

- (1) That the following matters be added to the Panel’s Work Plan for 2015/16 or 2016/17:**
 - (i) Adoption and Fostering of Sibling Groups: once the policy document is drafted and six months after implementation.**
 - (ii) Emotional and Mental Wellbeing of Looked After Children: progress reports including information on the allocation of the available finance.**
 - (iii) Journey to Excellence: progress report.**

***ACTION: Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services
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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